From Chaos to Solace

FROM Chaos

To Solace

Topological Meditations

Paul Rabinow and Anthony Stavrianakis

Anthropology of the Contemporary Research Collaboratory

ARC

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From *Erlebnis* to *Erfahrung* #1

Gathering elements
of a recent past

Analepsis

1

Parastēmata for Inquiry

Four quotations

Parastēma (-ta) | παράστημα (παραστήματα)

DEFINITION

A character term that refers to a subject's relation to the interconnection of truth and conduct. Ordinarily referring to the stature of a character, or else to the bearing and poise of a subject, it is not simply a mark of civilized manners, which could be understood as behavior arbitrated by a rule. Rather, *parastēmata* are what Michel Foucault has called an "ethical substance"—that which must be the object of conscious consideration—the questions a person must keep in mind in order to do what they do truthfully. *Parastēmata* can thus be given form as maxims.

USAGE

In our use, the concept of *parastēma* indexes neither a principle (discourse) nor a learned behavior, but rather the need to make a judgment about the distance or proximity between claims to truth (warranted assertibility) and the conduct of life (*bios*).

PARASTĒMA #1

JUDGMENT

> Evaluations, in essence, are not values but ways of being, modes of existence of those who judge and evaluate, serving as principles for the values on the basis of which they judge. This is why we always have the beliefs, feelings and thoughts that we deserve given our way of being or our style of life.

Gilles Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*[1]

PARASTĒMA #2

PROBLEMS

> It is not the 'factual' interconnection of 'things,' but rather the conceptual interconnection of problems, which forms the basis for zones of inquiry. A new 'science' emerges where new problems are pursued by new methods and truths are thereby discerned which open up significant standpoints.

Max Weber, " 'Objectivity' in Social Science and Social Policy"[2]

PARASTĒMA #3

FOYER D'EXPÉRIENCE

> "... I have tried to do a history of thought. And by 'thought' I meant an analysis of what could be called *des foyers d'expérience* in which forms of a possible knowledge (*savoir*), normative matrixes of conduct (*les matrices normatives de comportement*) for individuals, and virtual modes of existence (*des modes d'existence virtuels*) for possible subjects are linked together. These three elements forms of a possible knowledge, normative matrixes of conduct, and virtual modes of existence for possible subjects these three things, or rather their joint articulation, can be called, I think, '*foyer d'expérience*.'"
>
> Michel Foucault, *The Government of Self and Others*[3]

PARASTĒMA #4

GEMÜT

"The only possible anthropology is that where, rather than being tied to the passivity of phenomenal determinations, the Gemüt is instead animated by the hard work (*le labeur*) of ideas on the level of the field of experience. Geist will be therefore the principle, in the Gemüt, of a de-dialecticized, non-transcendental dialectic, given over (*vouée*) to the domain of experience assembled (*formant corps*) with the play of phenomena itself. It is Geist that opens up to the (*ouvre au*) Gemüt the freedom of the possible, strips it from its determinations, and gives it (*lui donne*) a future that it owes only to itself (*qu'il ne doit qu'à lui-même*)."

Michel Foucault, *Introduction to Kant's Anthropology*[4]

2

Toward a Contemporary Configuration of Ethics and Science

We have written three books together: *Demands of the Day: On the Logic of Anthropological Inquiry*; *Designs on the Contemporary: Anthropological Tests*; and, most recently, *Inquiry after Modernism*. The core problem of the trilogy is how to work through the impasses of available forms for grasping situations of inquiry that are experienced as indeterminate and discordant. The problem is simultaneously one of searching for a form to give to experience, as well as for the conceptual means to grasp it, and of making judgments about the indeterminations and discordances that are worked through, experientially and experimentally. Hence our introductory four quotations serve as conceptual and ethical maxims (*parastēmata*) for what follows.

To summarize the movement through the trilogy, in *Demands of the Day* (2013), our primary problem concerned the status of what we called "the actual" when confronted with an ethically discordant experience of fieldwork with bioscientists. The clarifications produced by thinking, while rooted in a present situation, were a conceptual reduction of one or more of its aspects.

"The actual" referred to the product of this identification, analysis, and reformulation, in counterpoint to the present. We were searching for a form of dedialecticized motion: dedialecticized, since the actual is not already present in and unfolding from that which is potential in the present and is not a resolution of the errors and breakdowns of past presents through the work of reconstructive recollection (Hegelian *Erinnerung*). What we learned by writing *Demands* was that to respond in the present to the demand and expectation for collaboration between the life sciences and anthropology on questions of ethics is to risk being caught in a series of double binds (which we specify and analyze in the book).

To refuse one side of the double bind may mean to try and try again, equipped with a capacity to bear the disquiet, and to suffer, perhaps even internalize, its withering effects. It could also mean to refuse both sides of the bind and to find other collaborative forms to participate in and observe the disquiet of contemporary knowledge, in a continuing search for a mode of subjectivity and ethics.

We chose the latter option and decided to focus a reflection on the ethical and conceptual stakes of searches for form in the arts and anthropology.

Thus, in our second book, *Designs on the Contemporary* (2014), we take up the Greek term *bios*, the mode

of life of human beings, as a site of problematization in the practice of inquiry. The problem we named was how to "vindicate" (in Seneca's sense of the Latin *vindicare*), a movement out and away from the discordances of the actual.

We tested this problem of how to produce a restive relation to experiential and historical determinations of the actual by way of two case studies: one on the artistic and collaborative practice of Gerhard Richter and one on the so-called Salman Rushdie affair, cases that contrasted the positive and negative results of the endeavor to transform the author or maker's relation to the actual, an ethos we qualified, in line with Rabinow's reflections of over a decade, as "contemporary."

Our final installment of what, with hindsight, we can call our *Logic of Inquiry Trilogy*, takes off from the claim that the stasis of inquiry we observe today is characterized by inadequate forms for interconnections between truth and subjectivity. Our work has been an effort both to exit from a situation of stasis and troubled irresolution and to search for, or perhaps invent, a path toward an entry into a different topological space of inquiry with a different mood and with a distinctive ethos.

Inquiry after Modernism (2019) first takes up a sequence of five figures in the domain of the arts from the threshold of modernity to the recent past: Francisco Goya, John Coltrane, Paul Klee, Pierre Boulez, and David Foster Wallace. These artists' practices provide soundings for an exploration of the emergence of the conventions, the formal possibilities, and the limits of what can be referred to as high modernism and late modernism—"late" both in a temporal sense and in Theodor Adorno's stylistic sense.

Drawing on the conceptual work of Rosalind Krauss, our core argument is that exploration of medium and technical support in the history of modernisms in the arts can aid anthropologists and others to develop equipment for moving beyond the limits of modernism in inquiry in the human sciences. The second part of the book then takes up modernism in anthropology and observes how anthropologists have worked with, but arguably not through, its limits.

We consider two problems concerning modernism and inquiry in anthropology. The first is the relation of medium to subjectivity. Marilyn Strathern's work provides us with an exemplary case of a "late style" in recursive experimentation with the limits of modernism in anthropology, in particular experimentation with its core conceptual supports: kinship, the person, and "the relation."

The second problem we take up is the stasis of the modernist medium of critique. Our concern is the challenge of maintaining reflexive awareness of the mood of pathos in inquiry, without verging into either critical irony or what we came to call anthropological kitsch. Our case in point is Lucas Bessire's *Behold the Black Caiman*, an impressively serious and exemplary monograph on the blockages of anthropology and modernism. Its form is ultimately a negative dialectic showing the space in which the author, in an admirably honest way, cannot grasp his purported object of inquiry and cannot realize the ethical and so-called political objectives he had wished to realize: he indexes, although not in these terms, the dangers of false universalization, facile integration of supposed knowledge, and ready-made sentimentality, all characteristic of kitsch. He can find no way out.

3

Grasp | Prepare | Recognize

Elements from a recent past

I. Grasp

From these prior works we seek to grasp (*lēpsis*) equipment, not problems.

Lēpsis | λῆψις

DEFINITION

Taking hold, seizing, catching. From the verb λαμβάνω:

1. take hold of, grasp, seize
2. of passions, feelings, etc., seize
3. catch, find out, detect

Problem

DEFINITION

The work of transforming breakdowns, difficulties, or discordancy into material (questions, objects, sites of inquiry) for thought.

II. Prepare

Prepare for a metamorphosis of our conceptual persona and problems of inquiry.

Paraskeuē | παρασκευή

DEFINITION

Greek: "equipment or preparedness." Equipment, though conceptual in design and formulation, is pragmatic in use. Defined abstractly, equipment is a set of truth claims, affects, and ethical orientations designed and composed into a practice.

USAGE

Equipment, which has historically taken different forms, enables practical responses to changing conditions brought about by specific problems, events, and general reconfigurations. Composed in a contemporary mode, equipment takes different forms. Because the contemporary is neither a unified epoch nor a culture, there is no reason to expect it to have a single form of equipment.

> The conceptual persona is not the philosopher's representative but, rather, the reverse: the philosopher is only the envelope of his principal conceptual persona and all of the other personae who are the intercessors [*intercesseurs*], the real subjects of his philosophy. . . . The philosopher is the idiosyncrasy of his conceptual personae. . . . The difference between conceptual personae and aesthetic figures consists first of all in this: the former are the powers of concepts, and the latter are the powers of affects and percepts. . . . *The role of conceptual personae is to show thought's territories, its absolute deterritorializations and reterritorializations.* Conceptual personae are thinkers, solely thinkers, and their personalized features are closely linked to the diagrammatic features of thought and the intensive features of concepts. . . . This is not two friends who engage in thought; rather, it is thought itself that requires the thinker to be a friend so that thought is divided up within itself and can be exercised. . . . These are no longer empirical, psychological, and social determinations, still less abstractions, but intercessors, crystals, or seeds of thought.

Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?*[1]

III. Recognize

We recognize that we are prepared for inquiry into the contemporary and equipped to do so and have confidence that a concept of *the form* already exists.

Form/Form-giving

DEFINITION

The composition of something in the world. The power of form for inquiry is that it tunes attention to the question of historical ontology: who we are as beings and how we exist in the world.

USAGE

The challenge of form-giving is to determine, bring together, and compose relevant elements in such a way that care and thought might become both a practice and an outcome. Thus the labor of form-giving constitutes the ethical challenge of inquiry.

4

Fait divers and the Problem of Public Happiness

From the outset, our collaborative work and discussions about the individual projects we have pursued have been oriented by the core ethical term *eudaemonia*.

Paul Rabinow revisited this major topic in his subsequent book, *The Privilege of Neglect: Science as a Vocation Revisited* (2020). A muted, conceptually mediated cri de coeur, the work narrates, celebrates, and then laments a period of flourishing (*eudaemonia*) in which graduate students and a professor came together to invent, experiment with, and relish a life of inquiry. They attempted to embody a practice of inquiry in which living, working, and thriving were mutually dependent as well as mutually reinforcing. The venue for this experiment was a graduate department at an elite university—formally, a site of privilege.

The experiment was eventually eroded and eliminated by the actions of other members of the department. Rabinow's narration of this journey is organized around a series of crucibles—periods of intense assembling and interrelating of practices of inquiry, norms of conduct appropriate to such a form of life, and the making of subjects capable of desiring and willing to work on themselves with others. As the process of assembling and interrelating was not always freely chosen by those concerned, these crucibles can be seen as exemplifying a mean, an excess, and ultimately a deficit.

At the end of this existential sojourn, the privilege of institutional security and the indifference appropriate to an elite venue with no ostensible instrumental claims remain. What has been undermined—betrayed—are the principles of what Hannah Arendt called "the life of the mind," although her term "mind" is too cognitive, too individual, too universal: the book explores alternatives.

With such betrayal in mind, *The Privilege of Neglect* also briefly lights on Arendt's term "public happiness" as a topic for consideration. The term appears during a discussion of Anthony Long's translation and understanding of *eudaemonia*, and the question of whether it is correct or appropriate to translate it as "happiness" (our answer: no!). Long writes:

> *Eudaimonia*, as its etymology indicates, is the name for a "blessed" or "god-favoured" condition, a condition in which a person's lot or *daimōn* is good. The term is normally and correctly translated "happiness"—correctly because, as Gregory Vlastos has insisted, *eudaimonia* includes both the objective features of "happiness" (attainment of good) and its subjective connotations (a profoundly contented state of mind). Greek philosophers, it is true, devote

> more attention to characterising the formal and objective features of *eudaimonia* than to telling us what it is like, viewed from within, to be *eudaimōn*. Nor is *eudaimōn* ever used in Greek, like "happy" in modern English, to describe transient moods or satisfactions. To call someone *eudaimōn* is to describe a person whose whole life is flourishing to the greatest extent available to human beings. But if *eudaimonia* is less psychological or subjective in its connotations than "happiness," there is abundant evidence to show that the Greeks took a *eudaimōn* person to be subjectively satisfied with his or her life. If that were not so, it would be impossible to account for the importance all philosophers attached to emotional balance as a condition of *eudaimonia*.[1]

Rabinow goes on to write that

> Happiness might be a goal for some, perhaps in the domestic sphere, but that is hardly the place for those seeking to practice *theoria*! Flourishing indicates a restive, recalcitrant, thriving, civic, "public happiness," to use Hannah Arendt's phrase.

The term had thus entered our discussions and it subsequently recurred in our conversations over time and in a particular context: in the summer of 2019, Anthony Stavrianakis moved back to the Bay Area to conduct an inquiry on care for people with the neurodegenerative illness amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS).

As we began to meet regularly, Stavrianakis would talk about his ongoing work with patients living and suffering with ALS. One theme that emerged was the political economy of care for terminally ill patients in the context of finite resources and major and ever-increasing social problems in the Bay Area, namely, homelessness (about 1 percent of the population of San Francisco, i.e., approximately 9,000 people), crime, and drug abuse. At the same time, the city of Berkeley had long-term issues with housing and town-hall discussions about people living in recreational vehicles (RVs) making use of public space and amenities.

Rabinow began to name this constellation of topics, themes, and questions, not yet conceived as a problem, in terms of "living beings" and "public happiness." We began to assemble materials, fragments of observations, and a constellation of *faits divers* (a term we will return to).

After much meandering and muttering, amid a situation of ambient discordancy and indetermination,

occasioned by overlapping and overdetermined scalar registers all seeming iniquitous, and lacking a venue for grounding and/or guidance, one lurches toward whatever imaginable pathway might seem, however fleetingly, worthy of sojourning along. The above serves as a description of the experience of the current situation.

This state of unsettled affairs might well indicate the grinding torsion occasioned by the formation of a problematization. The latter—by dicta—eschews either representation or construction per se; consequently one's recourse is to quest for problems, aware that they should not be posed in exactly the same terms as they previously had been. To delimit problems, one requires concepts and parameters, as well as an acute sense of the situation.

Prior work has yielded a robust gathering of concepts as terms of engagement. Even though the prior concept set had been put to various tests and had proven sufficient to orient work over stretches of other inquiries, once again, prior parameters cannot be safely assumed to continue to be pertinent to different situations. They must be put to a test and remediated as necessary. Such is the nature of inquiry.

Over the course of months, under sustained, if intermittent, pondering and probing (both affective and conceptual), something like a problem or problems have proved to qualify as candidates, albeit with the caution that any formulation at this juncture would probably be overly broad and under-specific.

The recurrent topoi of a contemporary problem domain have been citizenship, living beings, flourishing, and withering.

Given that prior venues (sites for collaborative work, whether for pedagogy or for inquiry) have been foreclosed, a lack of candidates to substitute or invent in their place has contributed to the stymied state characteristic of the overall situation. The quest for a venue must be bracketed for the time being.

Given this foreclosure, eventually the step toward some sort of clarification seemed to lie in naming the kinds of candidates for object domains that had been recurrent in discussions, meanderings, and mutterings. In order to overcome the incessant stasis and agitated stagnation, the prospect of curating without a venue or form somehow proposed itself, faute de mieux.

What material had become available to be curated? Articles concerning frequent topics of unresolved contemporary situations (homelessness, addiction, highly disparate life conditions adjacent or abutting each other, etc.). The local newspaper—*The San Francisco Chronicle*—known for its journalistic thinness, precisely

because of its thinness, has proved to be a convenient ready-at-hand equipmental site. The articles generally do little more than state a few facts (e.g., how many car break-ins there have been). Instead of in-depth investigative reporting, often the newspaper's journalists supply an abbreviated quote of a native or a bureaucrat's opinion or justification.

Consequently, the preexisting topoi and commonplaces circulating in the region go largely unexamined or explained, only "reported," in a manner of speaking. *The Chronicle*'s mediocrity proves to be an advantage for binning.

At first blush, these reports might well fall under the category of *faits divers* (brief news items). Fredric Jameson, in *The Antinomies of Realism*, is perplexed but intrigued by this category, which he attributed as central and distinctive in the corpus of Alexander Kluge (albeit not Kluge's coauthored theoretical writings).

Kluge, according to Jameson, is drawn to *faits divers* because they appear to have no author. Nonetheless, they are not quite random anecdotes. Rather, they are like gossip: they carry, embody, an air of veridiction about them. *Faits divers* make a tacit claim that they really did take place, somewhere, at some time.

Despite Jameson's claim that *faits divers* are affectively neutral, in this case, they are not. Indeed, these tropes provide "a measurement of intensities." Let's call these reports "proto-episodes" in an as-yet-to-be-formulated narrative.

The lure of these proto-episodes is occasioned by their intensities—given the problem set under consideration—and unarticulated veridicational claims of significance. Once they accumulate, an incipient sense develops of either a future narrative that might prove appropriate to ordering them or a commonplace structure that might serve to guide along "a way, a path, a journey."

Episode

DEFINITION

The second element in the word "episode" [after "*epi*"] is a compound of *eis* "into" + *hodos* "a way, path; a journey; a method, system," a word of uncertain origin. Transferred sense of "outstanding incident, experience" first recorded in English in 1773. By 1930s meaning applied to individual broadcasts of serial radio programs.

5 Equipment from Prior Inquiry

Demons
Include: *timeliness*; *morality*; *networks*; *individualism*; *stultitia*.

Daemons
Include: *untimeliness*; *equipment*; *venues*; *collaboration*; *restiveness*.

Our bold and, we think, warranted claim is that we have the elements of equipment to invent a possible way forward.

From *Demands of the Day* we take with us the insight that "For those who seek to move from actual configurations of discordancy toward an anthropology of the contemporary, they will need to identify, remediate, and inhabit a venue appropriate to the task."[1]

Such a venue, a *foyer d'expérience*, will retain both demons and daemons.

> [N]either a reconstructive endeavor nor an endeavor that seeks to produce pathways out of the actual toward a different figure of truth seeks to eliminate the demons of the actual uniquely in favor of the daemons. Rather, the pathway that a reconstructive endeavor would be likely to construct and follow would seek to make the demons less demonic, or at a minimum to neutralize their effects in future situations. By contrast, our efforts to remediate the actual configurations of discordancy accept the continued presence of these demons, by this time transformed through a series of curations, thereby opening up the possibility of practic-

> ing an anthropology, which, accompanied by demons, nonetheless is capable of listening to a (good) *daemon* (*eu-daemonia*).[2]

From *Designs on the Contemporary,* we learned to ask the question: "In what did vindication consist, as part of the motion out of the actual?"[3] In the work site of that particular book, we transformed Michel Foucault's "fourfold" of ethical parameters.

The fourfold comprises a series of categories to aid ethical analysis of the free relation to oneself: the ethical substance—that which constitutes the object of reflection and practice; the mode of subjectivation—how subjects become subjects of an ethically qualified sort, recognizing that they have obligations and that they are capable of practicing them; the telos or ends of that practice—ends which may well be internal or external to that practice; as well as askēsis—the ethical exercise to work on the specified substance, toward an end, and to become that subject of an ethically qualified kind.

> [W]e proceeded to reactivate our venue and began to assemble terms. We saw no reason not to reaffirm *eudaemonia* as our telos. The fourfold was a plausible candidate to aid us in articulating a form in which we might come to understand the interconnections of the subjectivational and veridictional stakes of the motion we knew needed to be explored. Taken up as equipment, the fourfold aided in designating the object of work in this motion: the problematic distance between truth and conduct as an object of reflection. The challenge was to produce a *technē tou biou* appropriate to the situation. This situation consists in the search for the remediation of older *technē tou biou* which were appropriate to inquiry, and the problem spaces in which they were invented and practiced. By so doing we anticipated opening up a range of motion.[4]

Our remediated ethical fourfold consisted of:

> **Ethical substance:** *Parastēma*
>
> ***Askēsis*:** *Technē tou biou*
>
> **Mode of subjectivation:** *Vindicare*
>
> ***Telos:*** *Eudaemonia*

We argue at the trilogy's end, in the conclusion of *Inquiry after Modernism*, for a remediated medium and technical support for contemporary inquiry in anthropology, a medium whose existence turns on collaboration within a shared crucible. For those who had the

chance to participate in the Anthropology of the Contemporary collaboratory, before it was terminated due to external forces and internal relinquishment, this is not news: what we discovered was a set of parameters that grasps the foyer of experimentation in which inquiry and form-giving can be practiced collaboratively.

The parameters are framed as ethical variables of excess and deficiency: parameters of the interconnection of truth and conduct, mode of judgment, and attitude, which each make visible a figure, an image of thought and practice:

1 "The restive" is a figure of impatience for giving form to a relation of veridiction and conduct, who, knowing well their frequent incompliance, must be obstinate in the search for a form to give the pairing. The figure of the restive seeks to avoid the deficiency of irony and the tragic excess of heroism.

2 "The vindicated" is a figure of pragmatic judgment of the subject relative to its time. The figure of the vindicated seeks to avoid the deficiency of *ressentiment* and the excess of self-justification.

3 For the element pertaining to mode of existence or attitude, "the unconsoled" is a figure of the recalcitrant pathos of hope in spite of all. The unconsoled seeks to avoid both the false illusions of reconciliation and the stasis of melancholy.

From *Erlebnis* to *Erfahrung #2*

From the recent past
to the present

Lepsis

6 From *Fait divers* to Zones of Indetermination

> Chaos makes chaotic and undoes every consistency in the infinite. The problem of philosophy is to acquire a consistency without losing the infinite into which thought plunges (in this respect chaos has as much a mental as a physical existence). *To give consistency without losing anything of the infinite* is very different from the problem of science, which seeks to provide chaos with reference points, on condition of renouncing infinite movements and speeds and of carrying out a limitation of speed first of all.

Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?*[1]

Rabinow's 2017 work *Unconsolable Contemporary: Observing Gerhard Richter* poses the question of how makers and thinkers acquire consistency without losing an awareness of movement amid chaos: a mediated manner of looking at, as well as learning from and thinking with, a skillful maker and experimenter's way of working through the historical, affective, and narrative breakdowns and remediations relative to which Richter's image-making is forged.

Rabinow quotes the German painter on his approach to form, which Richter says is very simple.

> Whatever is real is so unlimited and unshaped that we have to summarize it. The more dramatic events are, the more important the form.[2]

Rabinow has experimented in forms with the unresolved dialectic of *Reflections on Fieldwork in Morocco*; the tableau of *French Modern*; the chronicle of *A Machine to Make a Future*; and the ethical equipment of *Anthropos Today*. He is an explorer, furthermore, of modes of observation and conceptualization that remediate available responses to the forces, blind spots, and exitlessness of the external and internal condition that has been termed "modernity."

Those responses, in both the arts and sciences, in terms of mode, form, and genre, have been given the names realism and modernism. The labels matter to the specialists. For us, perhaps what matters most is that these terms indicate touchstones that simply allow us to say that neither "description" nor the heroization of what has long been considered to be the medium of anthropology—that is to say, both fieldwork and text, poetics and so-called politics—have been adequate responses to the problem of form in anthropological inquiry.

In *Unconsolable Contemporary*, at several key moments, reflections on Richter and his interlocutors are ramified by way of the writings of Richter's contemporary Alexander Kluge, who, in his inimitable style, provides markers for a search that takes place in the darksome zone of forms yet to be invented. Kluge has written:

> An objective situation in itself, that is to say the simple, instantaneous seizing of a moment, does not contain in itself the element of its organization, the element that renders it concrete. That is why the discovery of objective situations presupposes the production of the means of their production, the forms of objective production.[3]

7

Event

Pandemic as catalyst

Like so many others since February 2020, we have been enmeshed in the COVID-19 pandemic. Because of our different life situations, we have had to engage the pandemic in different ways. Given our many years of friendship and collaborative inquiry, we have taken our situation up in a reflective and existentially engaged manner. This practice has entailed a great deal of learning—of what is known about single-stranded RNA virus, of the veridiction, political, and ethical registers of modeling of the public health dimensions of the pandemic—such ongoing learning has been a challenge and a pleasure. It has been greatly facilitated but also complicated by the torrent of information, claims, theories, life experiences, and the like readily available on the Internet at a global scale. Over the course of the pandemic's unfolding, we have each formed judgments about the significance, meaning, and trajectory of the ever-proliferating commentary. These judgments arose from, returned to, and were tested as to their veridiction, political, and ethical warrants salient to each of our existential particulars.

As had become dispositional over the course of many years of working on our own as well as on collaborative projects, we assumed that the particular topics that drew us into their web had substantial overlap. Daily conversations and weekly encounters confirmed the mutual enrichment that such interchange entailed. To state the obvious, public health policy; the arts and vices of governmentality; expanding (rapid genomic sequencing), flourishing research communities; and the lack of such communities in other disciplines were all part of something broader than any of the particulars.

In recent years, this dispositional practice had led us to write a book together. This time, for a number of reasons to be specified, we rejected this option from the outset. We also rejected the blog form, because it seemed to be deeply anchored in and associated with personal opinion. The Web was already flooded with such subjective outpourings. The question then became, what form would be appropriate to our experiences, reflections, conclusions, and insights (if any)? We concurred on the challenge, but we were stymied in either creating a solution or even identifying others' work that seemed to meet the proverbial "demands of the day." In fact, one candidate for form had intrigued us and informed part of the shape of our previous book. That candidate occurred at the end of Rosalind Krauss's brilliant, learned, and idiosyncratic *Under Blue Cup*. Krauss produces a schema—whose form she does not name

(other than to call it the "expanded field of medium"). It lays out in starkly simple form the main terms of her book and renders them visible. It is static and structural (paired opposites).

Although her chart was not satisfying as a model to imitate, it proved a catalyst to further discussion and graphic outlines that increasingly grew in complexity. The terms proliferated. We kept wondering what we were in search of.

Eingang

In mid-May, Stavrianakis produced a series of multi-colored renderings of the terms we had agreed on. He then crafted a three-dimensional paper cut-out. This cut-out was inspired by discussions of the distinctive form of thinking that Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari explored in *What Is Philosophy?* We had both read this book a number of times over the years, being perplexed and challenged by its form and substance. We had never found a way to use it as an equipmental entry into our own inquiries or reflections on them. Rather abruptly, over the course of a few weeks, it suddenly presented itself (without being asked) as providing a range of help in our undertaking. The process was consistent with Deleuze and Guattari's core claim that the work of philosophy was at least in part concept formation, and that such concept formation arose from a problem, a problem that was both the source of and the telos of thinking, an event. In a quite different sense, Krauss's book could be read as a response to the event of the crisis of modernism in the arts and, in her astute judgment, the utter failure of attempts to produce an event or a set of forms that could be warranted as succeeding modernism in painting and sculpture.

For multiple reasons, we were not inclined to imitate either Krauss or Deleuze and Guattari. Not the least of those reasons was that the event, we finally decided, that engaged and concerned us was the pandemic. The challenge remained: what form to give this event and our immersion in it?

A starting point of our thinking and discussions had been Foucault's provocative passing comment to macro-level turbulent events that he called problematizations. They were neither epochs nor epistemes. In fact, Foucault cautions against trying to directly analyze them, because they were not available to either representations or construction. This was cryptic, no doubt,

but a maxim (*parastēma*) that proved cautionary. To simplify, Krauss's schema was representational or at least discourse-based in Roland Barthes's sense of the term, and Deleuze and Guattari's was self-described as constructivist in their own idiosyncratic sense of the term. From the outside, one might well argue that the candidates were representational and constructivist. Regardless, the daemon of Foucault hovered, advising us to eschew both, however much we admired the way that they had been put to work for a quite different array of problems. Despite that caution, it was encouraging to think that others had linked form and event as a means of addressing a problem.

Reflectively stultified but not paralyzed—quite the contrary—we reminded ourselves of one of our own maxims that had proved helpful in the past when stalled. "What have you been doing?"

Our recent work arose in part from the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic in its multiple aspects. These aspects included social, political, ethical, and scientific strands. As the event unfolded—unevenly, albeit rapidly—the prior dimensions that were being redistributed could not be ignored. These ranged from a serious and sustained body of scientific work on viruses, epidemics, and the like to histories of social and political machinery that had been put in place in other epidemics. We soon decided that these prior domains could themselves be misleading; we concurred that they were neither to be taken up literally—"quarantine is a disciplinary technology"—nor taken up as metaphor—"this is like Camus's plague."

Most importantly, we found ourselves enmeshed in the unfolding of things: we were too affected to entertain the idea that we were outside observers, although we did feel an urgent need to understand, clarify, and eventually to occupy a *Haltung* that seemed appropriate to events, whatever that might be. As the events were dramatic, differential in their impacts and articulations, and affectively impacting on different registers and scales, we concurred from the early days that the event—if that was the appropriate term—demanded a distinctive form. We knew many books were already being written *in medias res* and that the blogosphere was spewing forth cascades of prose.

A path gradually revealed itself: Stavrianakis started to organize terms and relations that had come up in discussions into charts, then schemas, then diagrams. This work was a promising start. It was, however, only a beginning, because we did not know where this mode

of work was leading us (except away from other forms of narrative and their related modes of thought and inquiry). The diagrams enabled us to begin a necessary, if obscure, process of deterritorialization, to use the term of Deleuze and Guattari. Stavrianakis then began making three-dimensional paper cut-out models. Finally, we were underway. There seemed to be a glimmer of a possible reterritorialization. We were encouraged that what we knew to be required—a distinctive form for inquiry, judgment, and endurance—might be founded (invented, discovered) if we persevered, although we also knew there were no guarantees.

What we did know, and eventually were convinced enough to name, was that what we were doing was a type of meditation in the sense Foucault had given to the term. This practice entailed work on the self; relating to the "configuration of the actual" (to use our concept); and drawing on and modifying existing resources for thought and inquiry.

The forms Foucault deployed from the history of philosophy seemed to us to be insufficient to the contemporary situation. They were too discursive, too linear, too subject-oriented.

So, what was to be done? As was our usual habit, we asked ourselves: what have we been doing? What was missing or misleading? Searching for aid from others, we converged on a consensus that the work of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, along with the commentaries of Manuel DeLanda, was the only plausible candidate. We had both read and reread much of this corpus over the years. It has never before proved to provide an opening to the type of inquiry we had been engaged in.

8

Four Strata of Indetermination / Discordance

Before narrating the "line of flight" that we took, it is important to recall a retrospective orientation that only later became clear, to wit, the core zones and strata of indetermination and discordance.

Both our prior work and the present conjunction of the pandemic were subtended by indeterminations and discordances concerned with four key terms: public happiness, living beings, reasoned discourse, and conduct (fig. 1).

For each of the four terms, we recognized and remembered (*Erinnerung*) that we had previously and currently been exploring a range of connected terms that operated in constellation. Public happiness was in constellation with flourishing (*eudaemonia*), to *eu zēn* (τὸ εὖ ζῆν), s*ōzein* (σώζειν, the present active infinitive of the verb σώζω), and perhaps mode of jurisdiction; living beings was in constellation with a trio of terms that we have explored, *zoē-bios-anthrōpos*; reasoned discourse, understood as *logos*, brings us to the terms "warranted assertibility," "serious speech acts," and "mode of veridiction"; finally, conduct brings us to consider a range of terms that includes *Haltung*, *Gestus*, "counter-conduct," and "mode of subjectivation."

Moreover, when we began to diagram them, it became clear that the relation of the four terms could be put on a plane and parameterized by way of the classic set of rhetorical terms, l*ogos*, *ethos*, and *pathos*. The determination here is that pathos is a matter of *distance*, the variable distance of a participant-observer from a plane of logos/ethos constituted by relations between the terms reasoned discourse, conduct, living beings, and public happiness (fig. 2). An excess or a deficiency of pathos produces bathos (fig. 3).

What we found to be enlightening, on rendering these relations visible in a diagram, is that the base of the diagram could be considered a diagram of a medium, understood as a problem space, and that the technical support was a second plane cutting through the diagram between the medium of the problem space and the pathos (or bathos) of the participant-observer. The technical support that we took with us as equipment from *Inquiry after Modernism* was composed of three variables: *Haltung*, vindication, and *parastēma*.

Moreover, this diagram showed us how it was that between the technical support and the medium, a conceptual persona intervenes (fig. 4).

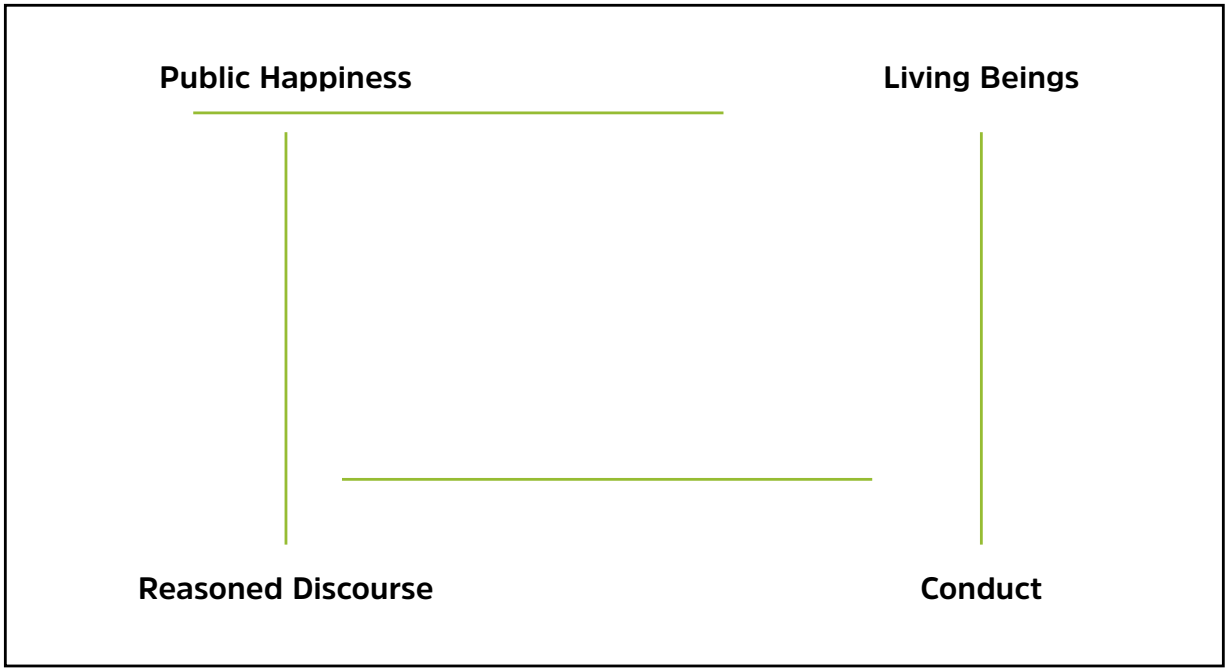


FIG. 1. *Diagram of four strata of indetermination / discordance (pre-problem space).*

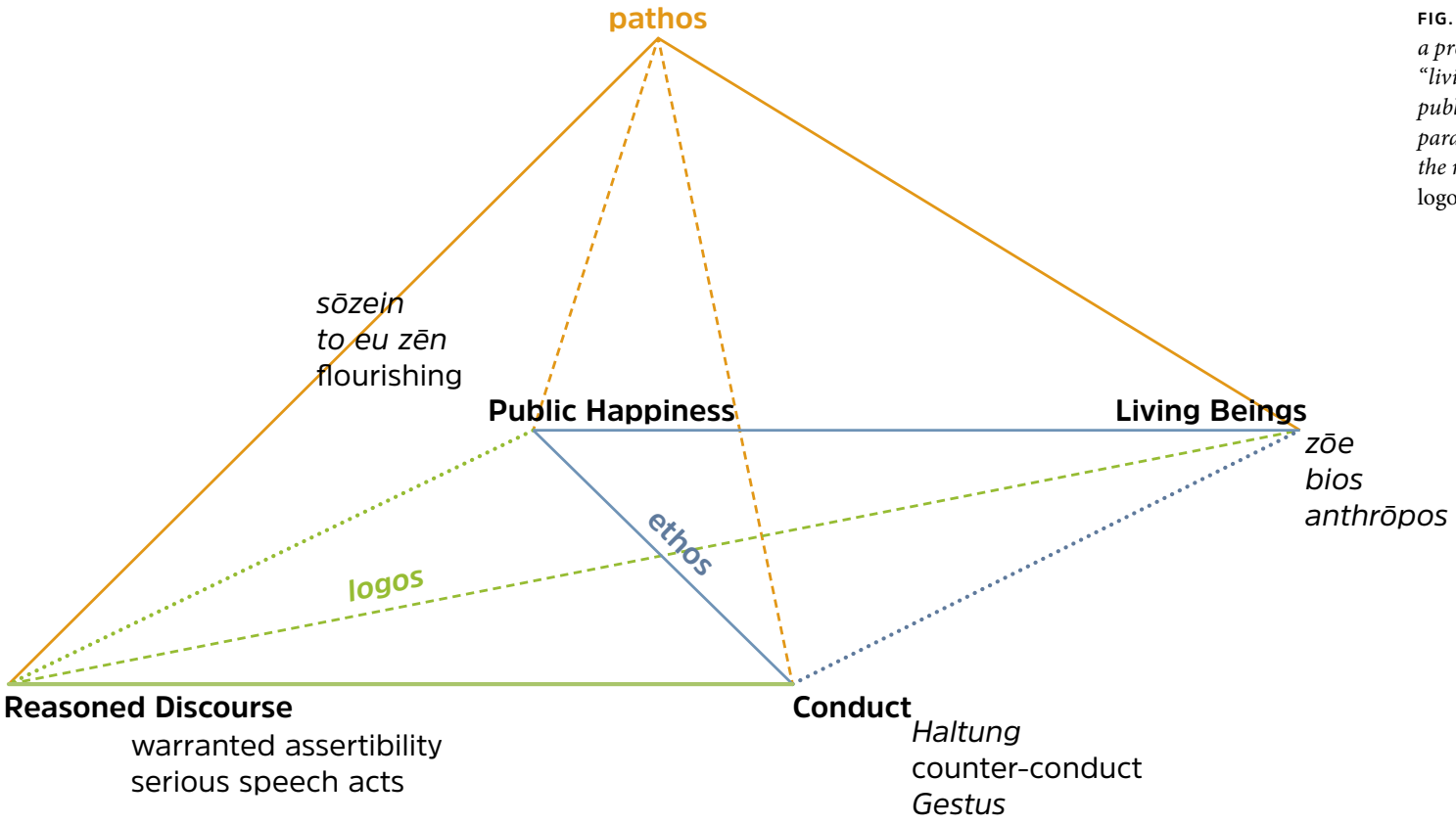


FIG. 2. *Diagram of a problem space of "living beings and public happiness" parameterized by the rhetorical triad* logos, *ethos, pathos.*

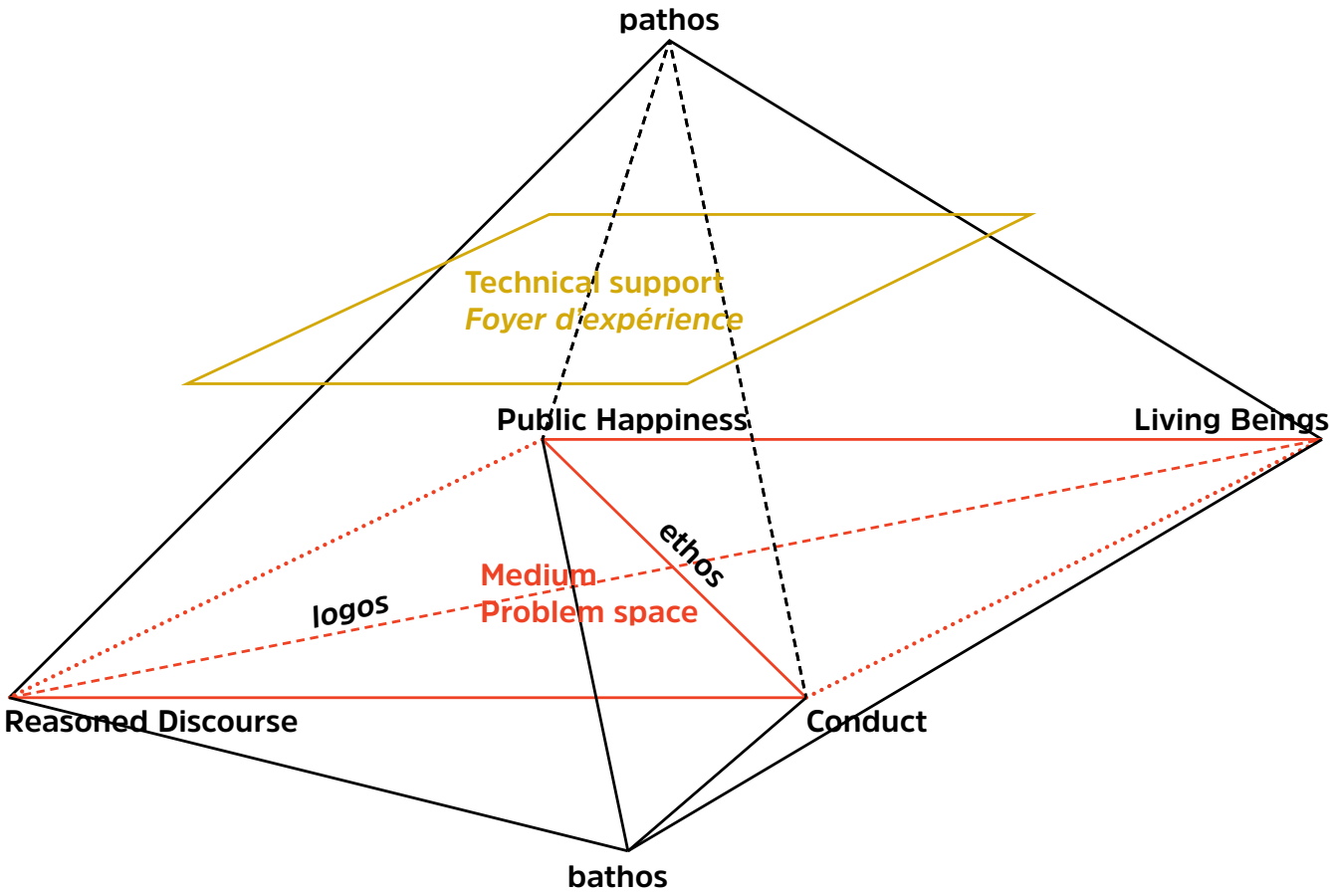


FIG. 3. *Diagram of the planes of medium and technical support within the parameterized problem space.*

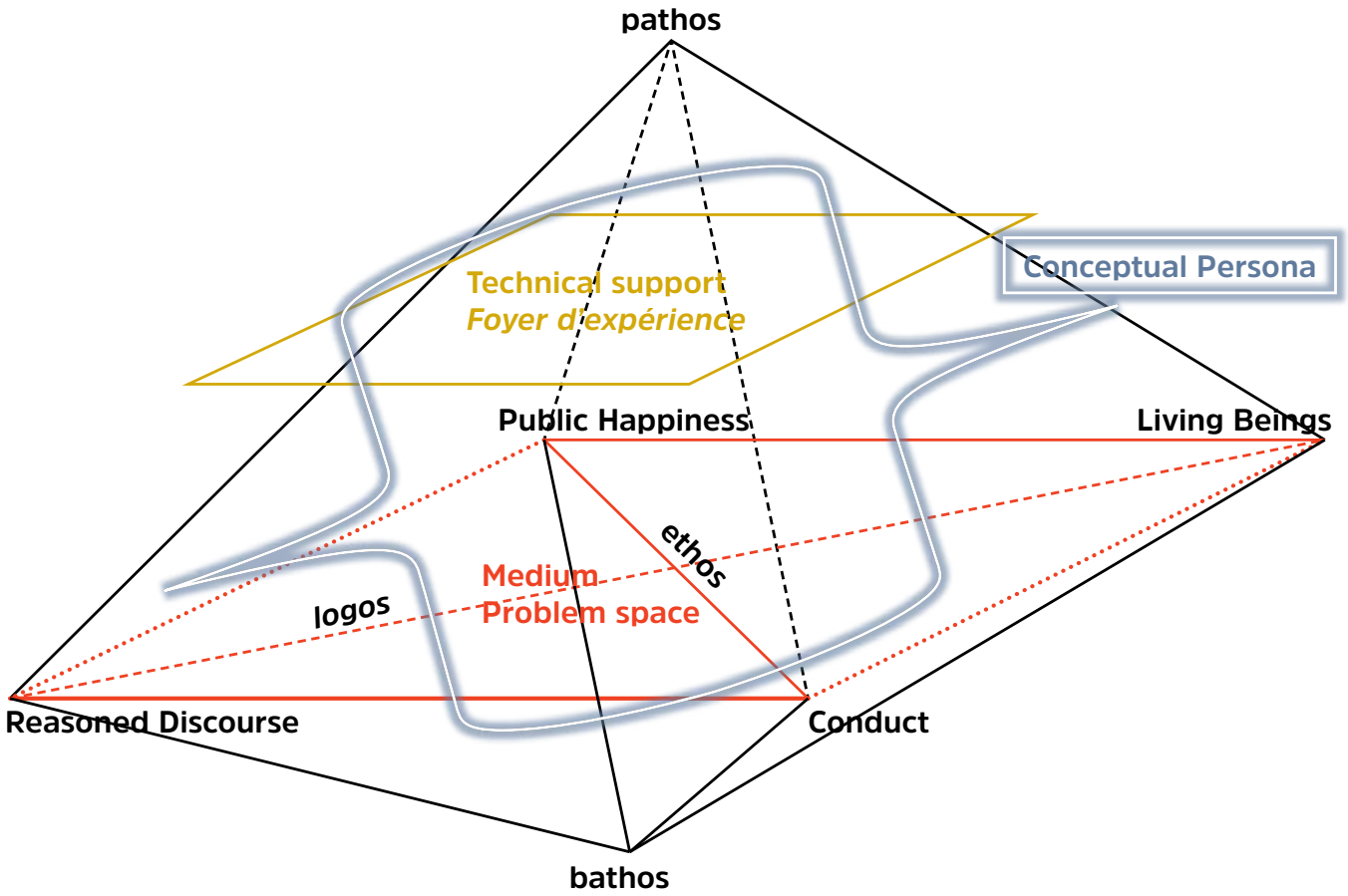


FIG. 4. *Diagram of the intercession of a conceptual persona through the planes of technical support and medium in a parameterized problem space.*

From *Erlebnis* to *Erfahrung* #3

From the present to one configuration of the actual

Syndialepsis

9

Two *Foyers d'expérience*

Actual

DEFINITION

Conceptual clarification and reduction into warrantable objects of the swarming confusion of the present. The initial objective of inquiry is to transform the present into the actual. The products of inquiry into the present are the actual. For John Dewey, thinking is an active response to a situation in which the everyday and taken-for-granted—the present—is troubled or breaking down.

USAGE

In this manner, once anthropology understands itself as starting with an already engaged activity, its task becomes one of participant observation. The anthropologist must devise ways to focus on problems encountered and the challenge of qualifying them, analyzing them, and, if possible, remedying them. Consequently, anthropology is a situated practice; it begins in a contextualized present and moves conceptually and existentially toward the production of a transformed state of affairs, the actual.

As the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic took its course, we asked ourselves whether it could be understood not as a founding event, but as a catalyst of transformations already underway. Our starting point was twofold: to ask whether a transformation was occurring at the level of "problematization" of the figure of *anthrōpos* (life, labor, language) and to reread Foucault's lectures on "Security, Territory, Population" from 1978, which were astoundingly precise in giving us conceptual tools with which to read what we thought *could well become* but is *not yet* a form/event. Hence, at first we were asking questions such as "What is the figure that is being problematized, within which the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic, and the responses to that problem, is problematic?" We considered that one version would be nature-culture relations in the Anthropocene, and another would be a problematization around a figure of governmentality: population-governance-security. We thought that the epidemiological object was a transformation of the modern object of population; we then wanted to ask how language and labor were undergoing changes.

In April 2020, we thought that the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic was an event that was neither unexpected nor unintelligible: a near-future pandemic had been

warned of by multiple people with the position or authority to make such claims (among them, Bill Gates and Michael Osterholm). What was unexpected was the speed with which a single solution, "lock-down," was accepted with little dissent globally.

We consider that the virus/response pair in this pandemic, as a "happening in the world," is in motion, taking on and being given a form (not yet stabilized) that catalyzes a period of anthropological re-problematization, which has arguably been in progress since 2008, the year of a global financial crash and the rollout of "apps."

Our working hypothesis is that the pandemic operated to indicate an entry point into the problem of how this event is in the process of being given a form, and hence proleptically our challenge is to consider how this event and its future form may become an event/form that has the capacity to disrupt, reconfigure, and re-problematize a figure of *anthrōpos* understood through the trio of life, labor, and language.

> Foucault's general principle is that every form is a compound of relations between forces. Given these forces, our first question is with what forces from the outside they enter into a relation, and then what form is created as a result. These may be forces within man: the force to imagine, remember, conceive, wish, and so on. One might object that such forces already presuppose man; but in terms of form this is not true.[1]

For a given form constituted through the domains/practices of life, labor, and language, what forces are entering and catalyzing them through this event? And what's the problem?

Briefly put, this work was premature, unearned, and perhaps did not even have the right aim, given what we were looking for—namely, a way to grasp a configuration of the actual so as to make a pathway forward and away for a future anthropology.

We realized that, on the one hand, there may well be a problematization of the figure of *anthrōpos* going on, but on the other hand, what we were able to name was the parameters of the "foyer" through which experience and experimentation with living through a pandemic were brought together. Following Foucault and Aristotle, as well as our prior explorations of *foyers d'expérience*, we laid out a table of three variables of knowledge, conduct, and mode of existence, parameterized by an ethical measure of excess, deficiency, and the mean.

Table 1, an early version, laid out parameters of ethical life in a situation of indetermination and discordance. It was not specific to the "case" of the pandemic but was tested in relation to living with the pandemic in the Bay Area in April 2020, while we listened to news and scientific reports from many places in the world.

As such, we recognized that while it was not correct for working at the level of a problematization, we could make determinations at the level of the problem space within which this event of the pandemic was being shaped as a *foyer d'expérience*.

We then asked ourselves whether, if there is a foyer on the side of the problem space, we could perhaps specify the characteristics of the foyer into which we as observers are equipped to enter and take up the foyer of the problem space. We drew this *foyer d'expérience* from the conclusion to *Inquiry after Modernism*, producing Table 2.

Foyer 1 (green) specifies the *foyer d'expérience* of the inquirer. Foyer 2 (yellow) specifies ethical life in a situation of indetermination and discordance.

- The foyers are non-referential. They are produced by the Conceptual Persona through the grouping of concepts.
- Foyer 2 comes from the "chaos" within which the form/event is happening, a foyer connected to the medium of the chaos.
- It is made visible thanks to the first foyer, which is the technical support for thinking, a conceptual support for/of the Persona.
- Within each foyer there is an *agencement* of elements, and between the two foyers there is *agencement*.
- This second *agencement* can be understood as an *agencement* of *Gemüt* and *Geist*.

Having previously drawn on Rosalind Krauss's book *Under Blue Cup* and having mobilized her conceptual pair of medium and technical support, we knew that our medium was the conceptual interconnection of problems, and our technical support was our *foyer d'expérience* (no. 1, that of the inquirer).

Thus, what we have added is an *agencement* of a second foyer, drawn from a problem space, using the terms within a *foyer d'expérience* to name and parameterize the ethical variables of a situation of discord and indetermination. Following Krauss's diagram for "the expanded field of medium," a reworking of her 1979 "Sculpture in

TABLE 1. *Crucible of experience of ethical life in situations of indetermination and discordance, with parameters of excess, deficiency, and mean.*

CRUCIBLE	Forms of a Possible Knowledge *Withering of critique?*	Norms of Comportment *Government of self and others*	Mode of Existence *Minor vices*
Excess	Nonscientific veridiction (especially) modeling	Counter-modern discipline	Malice
Deficiency	*Fait divers*	Counter-modern autonomy	Mute and docile subjects
Mean	Science, which gives "no" answers	Public happiness	Counter-conduct

PROBLEM SPACE	Judgment			Discordancy			Indetermination		
FOYER	Modes of Existence *Evaluation*			Norms of Comportment *Government of self and others*			Forms of a Possible Knowledge *Warrant*		
Excess	Malice			Counter-modern discipline			Nonscientific veridiction		
Deficiency	Minor vices			Complacent auto-nomos			*Fait divers*		
Mean	Maturity/Enlightenment Task and Obligation			Public happiness Free men in agonistic construction of a constitution			Science, which gives "no" answers		
	Reconciled	Unconsoled	Melancholy	Self-justification	Vindication	*Ressentiment*	Heroic	Restive	Ironic
	Excess	Mean	Deficiency	Excess	Mean	Deficiency	Excess	Mean	Deficiency

Equipment

TABLE 2. *A crucible of experience of ethical life in a situation of indetermination and discordance, and a corresponding (equipmental) crucible of inquiry into a crucible of ethical life, each with parameters of excess, deficiency, and mean, all situated within a larger problem space.*

the Expanded Field," we drew our own diagram of what we came to understand not as an "expanded field" with its structured and structural underpinnings, but as the conceptual persona that both conducts and is the product of the *agencement* of *foyers d'expérience* (fig. 5).[2]

Medium, following Krauss, primes the question: "who are you?" Technical support primes the ethical question, and challenge of whether you are the subject you take yourself to be, in the test of experience. Thus, we think that there is a conceptual persona constituted through four terms: memory, method, meditation, and *Betrachtung*. These four ways of thinking about thinking are rendered manifest in the motion between medium and technical support, with an additional axis of affect, a movement between pathos and bathos, the latter understood as a failed pathos.

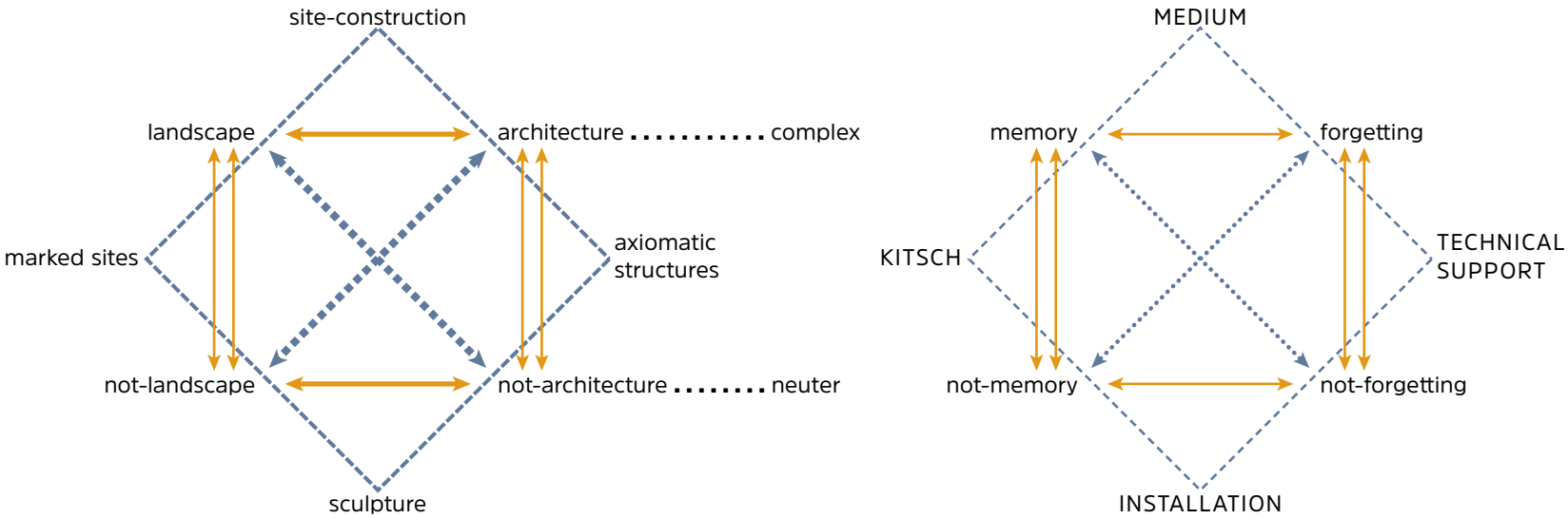


FIG. 5. *Diagrams of sculpture and medium in the expanded field. From Krauss 1979, 2011 (see note 2).*

10

Conceptual Persona

Moving through the actual

In a zone of indeterminations and discordances, given form in our manifold, a conceptual persona intervenes twice (by way of six operations). These interventions are shown diagrammatically in table 3.

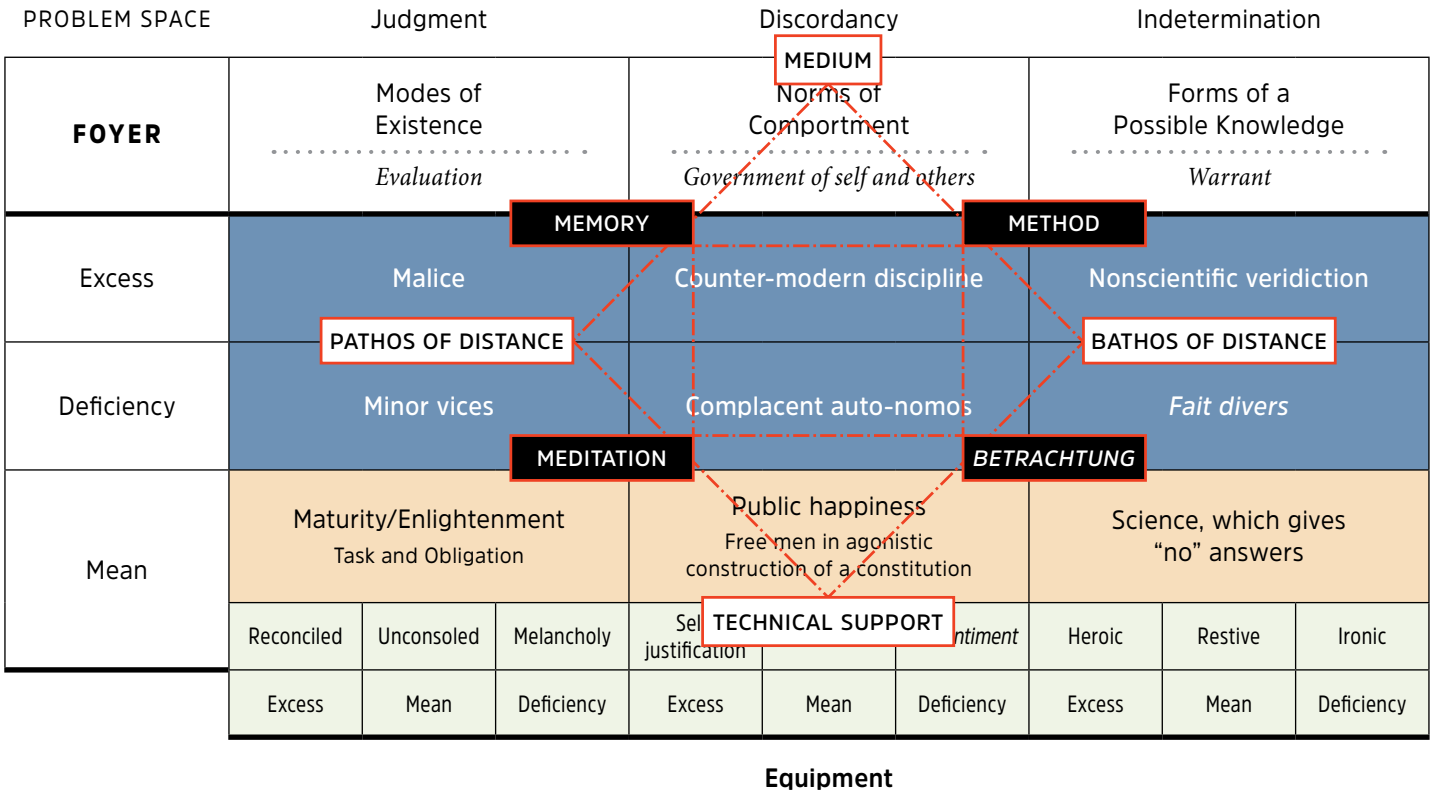
In the first intervention, the conceptual persona (i) plunges into chaos and (ii) draws/drags out determinations; with these determinations drawn from the chaos, (iii) diagrammatic features of a plane of immanence are produced; that is, determinations are doubly worked over: they are "drawn" (passive) and then they "diagram" (active)—perhaps in our terminology this would be a movement from a present to an actual.

In the second intervention, the conceptual persona then (iv) establishes a correspondence between the doubly worked-over determinations (passive/active), (v) through groupings of concepts, (vi) on a plane whose cleavages follow these determinations. This second step produces the plane in which the concepts for *foyers* are produced.

Conceptual personae are sites for observation according to which conceptualized planes are distinguished or brought together (*agencer*). The conceptual persona, the site from which the plane is observed and worked over, constitutes the conditions under which each plane is filled with a constellation of concepts (given the form of *foyer d'expérience*).

The conceptual persona intervenes between chaos and the diagram of *foyers*, made possible by drawing out determinations from the chaos, and between the plane and the intensive features of concepts that populate the plane in the *foyers*.

TABLE 3. *Our conceptual persona mapped onto our parameterized problem space and interconnected crucibles (inquiry/problems in ethical life).*



Our conceptual persona assembles four terms: memory, method, meditation, and *Betrachtung* (fig. 6). The first three terms have been worked on by Foucault under a form for the work of thought to make thinking an object of thought. We add *Betrachtung*, an active kind of reflection and intervention, which is the noun form of the German verb *betrachten*, whose semantic range includes considering and observing as well as esteeming. These four terms underpin the "expanded field" of inquiry and equipment, the technical support, medium, and affect field in which the conceptual persona operates.

Medium is linked to the pairing memory-method, priming both Krauss's question "who are you?" with our concern for medium as the conceptual interconnection of problems. Technical support is linked to the pairing meditation-*Betrachtung* as the active pole of intervention and testing of the problem space in thought and experience. Diagrammatically, the affect field, in which a relative distance of the conceptual persona to the articulated crucibles of experience runs from pathos to bathos, is linked on the pathos side through the pairing memory-meditation, and on the bathos side through the pairing *Betrachtung*-method. The failure of pathos on the side of bathos is in the excesses and deficiencies of method as a way of conducting *Betrachtung*, without the test of meditation, or the memory of the medium in which the conceptual persona is moving.

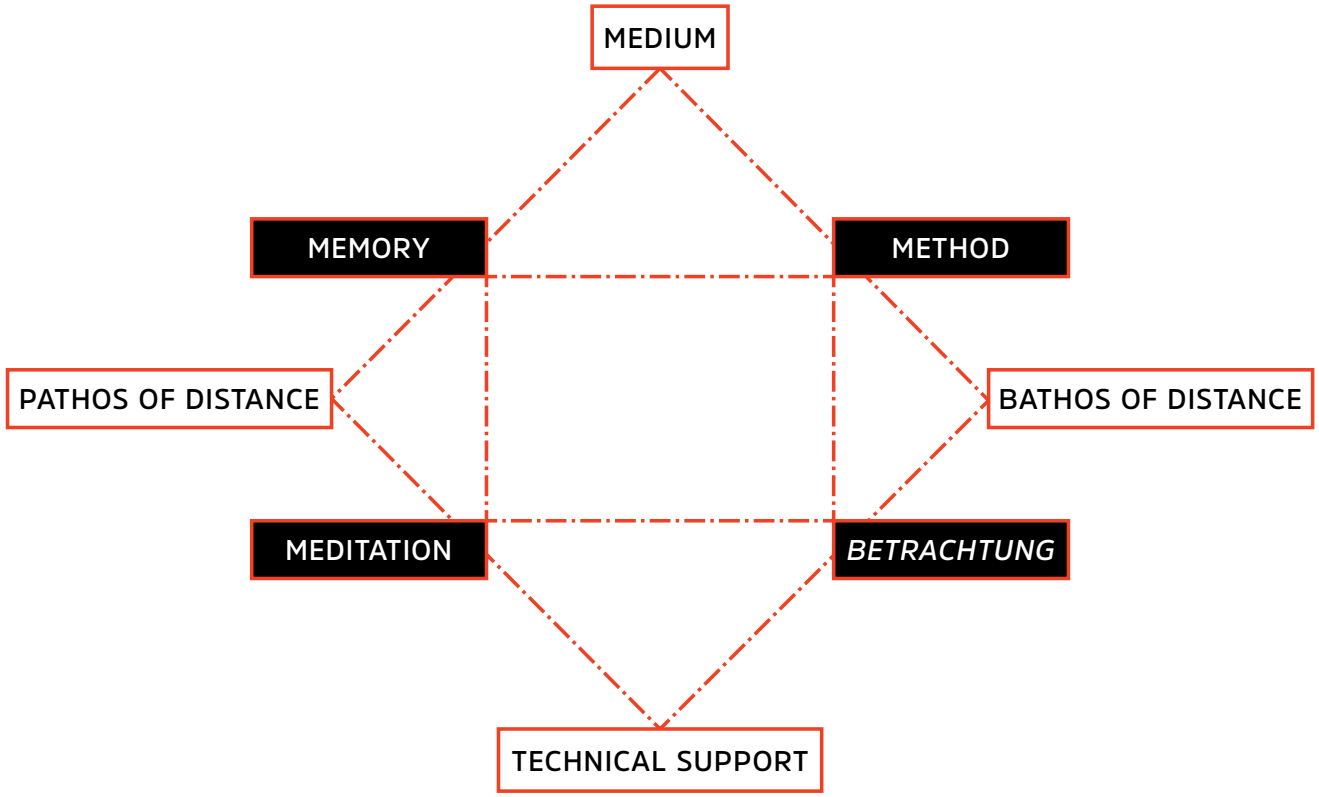


FIG. 6. *Diagram of our conceptual persona.*

11 From a Euclidean Geometry to Topology

Looking at Table 3, we realized the table was too static and not graspable in only two dimensions. We needed more dimensions. The first step was to make a model, so as to make visible the multiple planes on which the diagram was operating (fig. 7).

We showed the model to our friend Roy Fisher. His reaction was to link it to string theory, in which Edward Witten's solution to his problem was that they "needed more dimensions." Fisher then pointed out two things: meditation is the crucial node/axis on which this diagram was operating, and that in string theory you can have dimensions within dimensions.

FIG. 7. *Toward three dimensions.*

12

Manifold Meditation

I wanted to define the meaning given to the particular precept 'turn your gaze on yourself,' 'turn your attention on yourself,' 'apply your mind to yourself.' In posing this question and seeing how Seneca or Marcus Aurelius resolves it, it seems perfectly clear to me that it is not in any way a matter of constituting knowledge of the human being, of the soul, or of interiority, alongside, in opposition to, or against knowledge of the world. What, then, is involved is the modalization of the knowledge of things, with the following characteristics. First, it involves the subject changing his position, either rising to the summit of the universe to see it in its totality, or striving to descend into the heart of things. In any case, the subject cannot properly know by remaining where he is. This is the first point, the first characteristic

of this spiritual knowledge. Second, on the basis of this shift in the subject's position there is the possibility of grasping both the reality and the value of things. And what is meant by 'value' is the place, relations, and specific dimension of things within the world, as well as their relation to, their importance for, and their real power over the human subject insofar as he is free. Third, this spiritual knowledge involves the subject's ability to see himself and grasp himself in his reality. It involves a kind of 'self-viewing' ('*héauto-scopie*'). The subject must see himself in the truth of his being. Fourth, and finally, the effect of this knowledge on the subject is assured by the fact that the subject not only finds his freedom in it, but in his freedom he also finds a mode of being, which is one of happiness and of every perfection of which he is capable.”

Michel Foucault, *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*[1]

Manifold

DEFINITION

In mathematics, a topological space that locally resembles Euclidean space near each point. More precisely, each point of an *n*-dimensional manifold has a neighborhood that is homeomorphic to the Euclidean space of dimension *n*. In this more precise terminology, a manifold is referred to as an *n*-manifold.[2]

We had become aware (without knowing) that we were in search of a form through which to work. We seemed to have taken for granted, or at least did not thematize, that, in order to discover or invent an appropriate form for this new project, we would be obliged to shift venues. The previous venues—pedagogical Labinar, collaborative sites and practices of pursuing inquiry on the way to prose—had certainly afforded thriving work—but work of a different form.

As we proceeded, it became clearer that elements of those venues could be disarticulated and put to other uses. Engaging in ongoing discussion and reflection in a collaborative mode was not only possible but necessary and salutary. Producing pieces of prose certainly helped to clarify ideas and, more importantly, to specify problems: it seemed that we were traveling along Dewey's road of objects to objectives. In fact, we were in motion but proceeding toward different ends. We did not fully realize that we were still in search of a different practice—one that a different form and a different venue would make available to us—in a different mode.

The great value of the concept of the manifold for our work is that it serves as both a venue and a form.

We continued to search for knowledge. We were uneasily and vaguely aware that the form of knowledge we were stumbling and stammering toward must be possible, although what it was and why no one else seemed to have found it remained unexplained. Around the world, numerous normative practices were being invented and imposed as a reaction to the pandemic as it unfolded and became narrated and codified. The dominant normative practices were troubling and problematic, which does not mean that they were always wrong or incoherent (although at times they were). Rather, the incessant discordancy and layers of indetermination—found when one stopped to examine the norms and practices required to meet the current demands (and we felt that there were such demands and they called for a response)—cast different norms for individuals and populations and called for an invention or at least a concerted reflection.

Eventually, it became clearer that virtual modes of existence of possible subjects were required if one were to work in the form/venue of a topological manifold space. Presumably there were such subjects among the mathematicians working on topology and the engineers actualizing inventions from their work. In regard to the issues that concern us, we knew of no candidates of possible subjects that fit the requirements of the manifold; even if this claim is true, it does not obviate the need for a virtual subject whose mode of existence differed crucially from that of previous knowledge workers.

Dispositif or assemblage or *agencement*

One important way in which operating within a manifold differs from prior work is that this topological space contains both Euclidean and non-Euclidean spaces (figs. 8 and 9). Navigating these sites (which function with different parameters and make different demands for motion) would seem to require a mode of subjectivation that morphs. We are familiar with the so-called rules of operation of the Euclidean sites. We are not familiar with the parameters, rules of operation, and *parastēmata* of the non-Euclidean sites and "neighborhoods." Further, how to move from one type of space to another and back is a conceptual challenge that must be addressed.

In a word, conducting inquiry in a manifold, a topological space of multiplicities, demands clarification (however tentative).

A candidate term, taken not accidentally from Deleuze, that should be put to various tests is *agencement*. Phrases like "agency with agents" spring to mind. Another metaphor that might help: "being drawn" or "allowing oneself to be drawn" from one type of space to another. How do we describe an inquiry (and inquirer or inquirers) moving from object to objective in a manifold?

At the very least, such motion requires a distinct form of meditation. Remember, Foucault's elaboration of meditation turned on the subject of knowing and caring for the philosophic self. We are not at that stage.

Perhaps our meditations (neither method nor memory) turn at this early stage on attempts to know and to protect (*sōzein*) the manifold. Such *sōzein* had been part of the process of building the previous forms/venues. Such reflective practice—and the diverse manners of putting its elements to the test—had played a central role in the Labinar (again, neither method nor memory).

What are, or already have been, the obstacles encountered?

The challenge is to change impediments (such as those that Sianne Ngai analyzes) into obstacles such that they can be inquired into.[3]

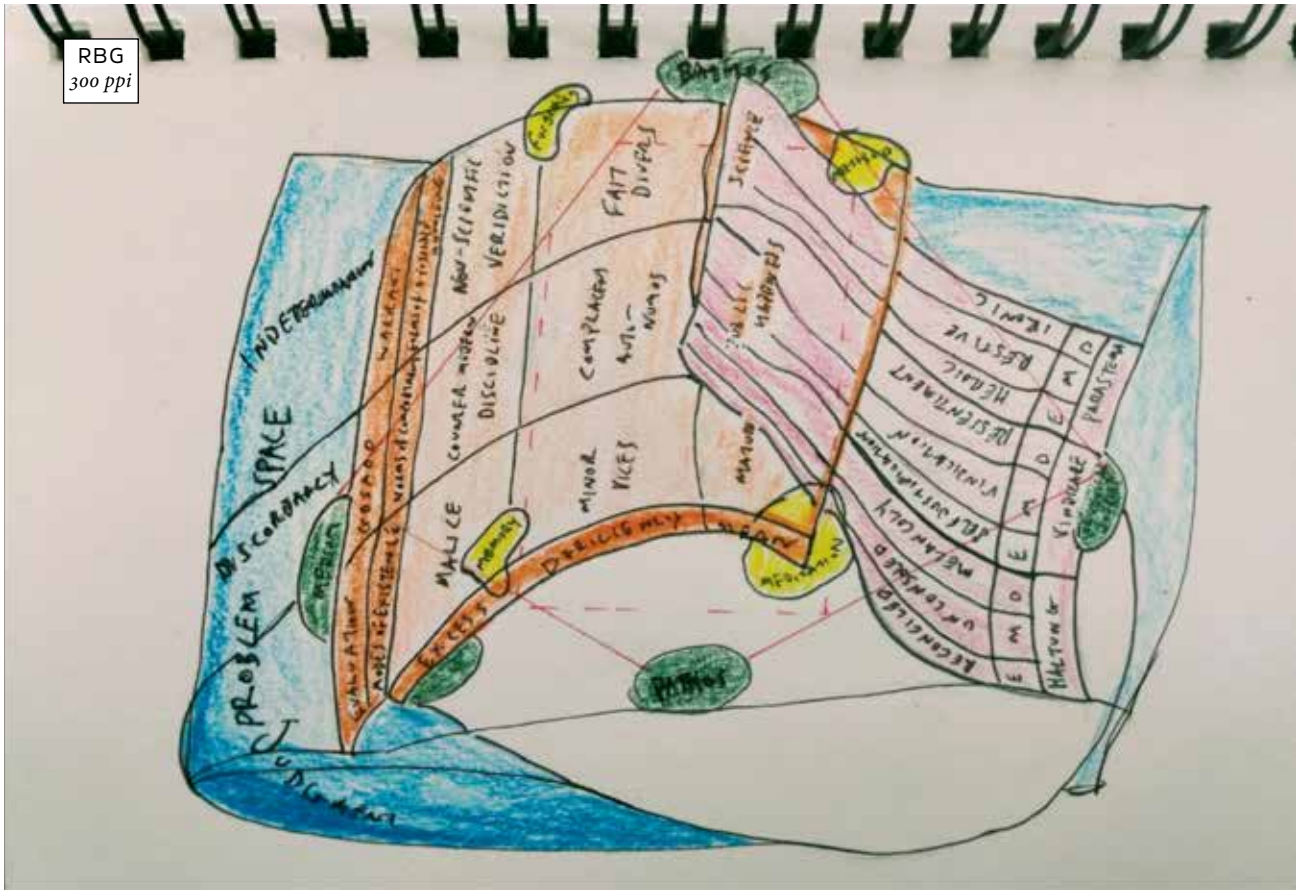


FIG. 8. *Drawing the conceptual persona in the manifold meditation (topological space).*

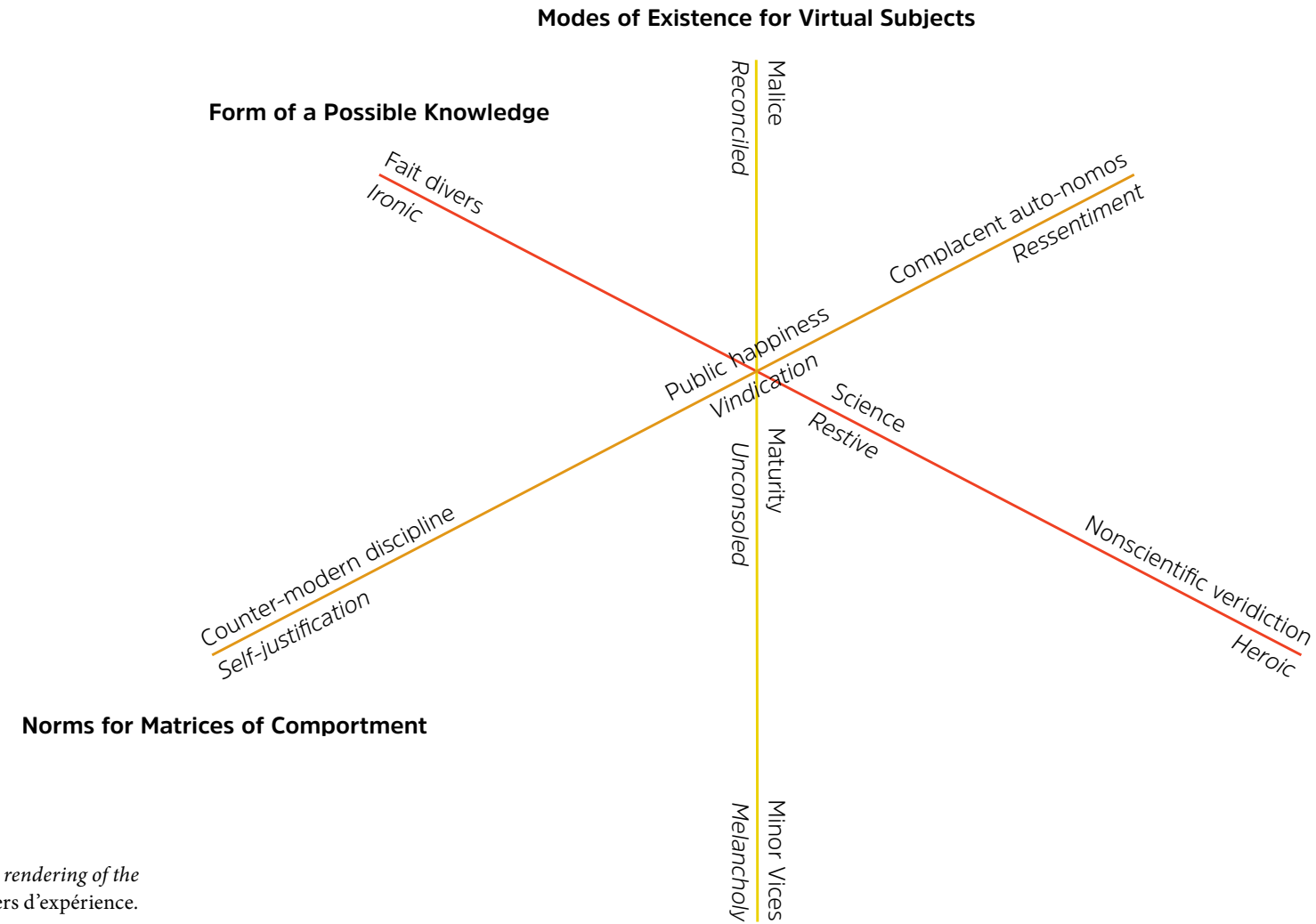


FIG. 9. *Local diagrammatic rendering of the articulation of two* foyers d'expérience.

From *Erlebnis* to *Erfahrung* #4

From the actual to
the solace of the minor

Metalepsis

13

From the Marginal to the Minor Anthropologist

> As a matter of deep pragmatist semantic principle, the only way to understand the content of a determinate concept, he [Hegel] thinks, is by rationally reconstructing an expressively progressive history of the process of determining it.

Robert B. Brandom, *A Spirit of Trust*[1]

> “. . . a minor [. . .] literature begins by expressing itself and doesn’t conceptualize until afterward.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> There is thus a machinic index each time a machine is being built and is beginning to function, even though one doesn’t know how the disparate parts that make it up and make it work actually function.”
>
> Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Kafka*[2]

A target object eventually began to take shape on our horizon. We knew of a term that, stated broadly yet still imprecisely, suited such a concept/object: the minor. We took the term from the work of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, especially their *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*. We began to explore what is meant by the term "minor" and what it is designed to do. Deleuze and Guattari deployed the term in the field of literature. We wondered whether we could invent or be invented by a "minor anthropology."

Reflecting on our recent practices during one of our frequent conversations, we alighted on a differentiation between two topoi: the minor and the marginal. We came to see our recent collaborative work—*Inquiry after Modernism*—as having been marginal in the simple sense that it fell outside of the current reigning modes of inquiry and scholarly presentation. As we have been told by editors at a range of university presses (at times explicitly and at times in coded language), our work was not politically correct because of its insufficient acknowledgment of the currently demanded range of sources, commonplaces, and topics. No doubt.

Hence, the work not only was considered to be discursively marginal but was also effectively marginalized. An additional sense of the term "marginal" suggests that the work might well be considered untimely. It might just be ahead of the dominant norms of the discipline. We self-consciously rejected the sense that while the work was unappreciated in the present, eventually, as conditions changed, it might become accepted as major. Although several of Rabinow's books had followed this trajectory, in this instance we were quite consciously not seeking retrospective vindication and integration into the discipline's future mainstream. Rather, given our enforced marginal status, we resolutely set ourselves the task of seeking new forms adequate to new modes of inquiry. We bracketed the question of whether others would eventually follow suit. We also bracketed considerations of power relations and academic politics so that we could proceed with the process of thinking.

In sum, the position of being discursively marginal forced us to seek other forms of enunciation. Here a parameter of "minor work" was intellectually and affectively pertinent. Deleuze and Guattari characterize the minor as being "A line of escape, and not freedom. A vital escape and not an attack."[3]

Foucault's phrase "One does not want to be 'governed like that' " grasped us. We shared a felt need to escape

(knowing that total escape was not available, or probably desirable, as an option). As we gradually came to understand our practice as possibly contributing to a minor literature, it slowly became clear that attacking the dominant apparatus was insufficient (again, we lacked the power to do so except on the veridictional plane).

We felt obliged to do so because we were both in a process of different moments and experiences of flight from the reigning academic game and, as we eventually thematized it, we were both in search of deterritorialization and some kind of reterritorialization. Initially, micro-political forces in the academic world drove this flight. To use the current fashionable trope, our work—it was made clear to us in no uncertain terms—had been "canceled." Not only did we not have a place but also we should not even consider having one within this discursive regime. The marginal and untimely could bide their time. The minor was obliged to flee. Consequently, the task, obligation, and challenge became that of inventing or discovering a form of enunciation that fell outside the reigning parameters of the discipline.

The lack of power to inflect or totally evade the situation neither meant nor implied—quite to the contrary—that one had thereby disengaged from "a political immediacy." Gradually and haltingly, demanding forbearance, the steps we were taking, without an explicit direction to guide them, took a variety of shapes. We put these emergent shapes to various tests. We cautiously and tentatively concurred that we were at the threshold of articulating and experiencing, in our case, a minor anthropology.

It was increasingly clear to us that the goal of the project was not communication in any standard sense of the term: our cogitations and perturbations were not tending toward any extant genres; hence, there was no rhetoric to move an existing audience. In what was certainly a flight from the reigning configuration of the actual, one goal was to establish some kind of haven that we could inhabit. Again, there was no explicit expectation of instrumental efficiency or operation.

A further question loomed for eventual consideration: were we engaged in *counter-conduct*?

Steps toward a minor anthropology: The *logos* of a modified *anthrōpos*

We were undertaking this work for other reasons. In a sense, the undertaking might well be considered as

a speculative enunciation in Albrecht Dürer's sense. It provided a site to bring us into a common frame: *syndialēpsis*. This archaic term, used neologistically, captures the critical dimension of a collaborative (*syn-*) form with the mode and practice of intellectual work and judgment (*dialēpsis*). It was an exercise in therapy or, more precisely for us, *sōzein*. It created a protected space for collaborative animation (no one could figure out what we were doing even if they were to attempt to do so). It was a venue for increasing capacities without intensifying (existing) power relations. It was a haven for experiments in truth and subjectivity. While not resolving the external power relations, or remaking reigning discursive formations, it provided solace. It was, however, not an artistic endeavor per se; the veridictional drive remained paramount.

One challenge was to think more about the "anthropological" as not being identical with the "philosophical." Although we drew concepts from Deleuze and Guattari, Dewey, and Brandom, none of them had used those concepts to conduct the kind of inquiry we were haltingly pursuing. Our stakes and objectives turned on *anthrōpos*.

A parameter of the minor is that conceptualization follows expression. Notice, this process does not deny, negate, nor leave behind the affective; or, as we have come to understand, it should not. It was not a question of proposing a comprehensive alternate security apparatus—one had no power to do so in any case.

We returned again to Deleuze and Guattari's conceptualization of the minor:

> The three characteristics of minor literature are the deterritorialization of language, the connection of the individual to a political immediacy, and the collective assemblage [*agencement*] of enunciation.[4]

We have alluded to the first two characteristics outlined by Deleuze and Guattari. As we attempted to clarify their gnomic pronouncements (enunciations), we realized that their term that seemed the most familiar—*agencement*—clearly had no English equivalent. Its commonly accepted translation as "assemblage" was misleading. This felt unease was validated by the fact that Stavrianakis had previously explored the complexity of the term in a seminar at the EHESS. The word fell into that class of terms that Barbara Cassin has named as "untranslatable."

This state of affairs did not lead to a better English term but rather to a more sustained reflection on what

field of practices and objects the French terms had been invented to render visible and available for use. By this point in our journey, we had tentatively concurred that a plausible candidate term for the site of our explorations was "topological manifold" (see above), in which and through which we were authorized to call our endeavors meditations (see above) in the sense given to that term by Foucault. Such a venue, which we came to understand was also a form, was not a readily recognizable type such as an "assemblage" had become to swaths of the human sciences and humanities.

14

Shadows of the Citizen

A change in medium

We have devoted much time and labor to establishing an object that would, we hoped, facilitate the identification and coordination of parameterized elements and motions, thereby leading us toward a preliminary diagnosis of the present. From that stammering work, we hoped to be able to render a preliminary sketch of the configuration of the actual—one that was neither fully discordant nor fully indeterminate (on our side).

Manifold meditations is the tentative form given to this labor.

Once an initial rendering of the object was achieved, it became apparent, not unexpectedly, that further objectives presented themselves as demanding attention and careful conceptualization. One task was to consider what forms, domains, and dynamics needed to be thought about beyond, or adjacent to, the space of manifold meditations.

Following Foucault's startlingly illuminating laying out of the elements of the *dispositif(s)* of security, two such domains can be identified: that of "the people" and that of "the sovereign." The next objective requiring inquiry and warrant is, What topological form do we give these domains and how do we relate them to manifold meditations?

Moving to a different register, we ask, How does elaborating that objective inflect the prior operative understanding of the conceptual persona, the plane of immanence as well as the conceptual repertoire we had previously forged for the manifold meditation?

And, if this task were to be successfully carried out, would that put us in a position to make warranted judgments about the configuration of the actual?

This last question produced not judgments of the actual but rather a change in medium. Our medium changed from four strata (*logos*, conduct, living beings, public happiness) rendered into a plane of problems to a plane that cannot be oriented (Möbius strip) in which *zoē/bios* are both separate and continuous, producing a problem of citizenship for "the sovereign" and "the people."

***Bios* | βίος, ὁ**

DEFINITION

Life, i.e., not animal life (ζωή), but mode of life, manner of living.

***Zoē* | ζωή, ἡ**

DEFINITION

Living, i.e., one's substance, property, after Homer, life, existence, opposed to death.

The cut of population: *Zoē/bios*

A topological problem space of citizenship is produced by the cut of population, which is an eighteenth-century intervention into governing *zoē/bios* and the shadows and lights of sovereign power (fig. 10). The problem of citizenship is made visible in the distance regarded (contemplated, considered, *die betrachtete Distanz*) by the conceptual persona between sovereign power and the people. In this transformed manifold, there is no *foyer d'expérience* because, strictly speaking, we have no *Erlebnis* of political life.

Pathos of distance, bathos of distance

In his 2012 work *Peuples exposés, peuples figurants*, Georges Didi-Huberman asks about the under- and overexposed conditions through which "*les peuples*" are represented.[1] How do we grasp "the people" with respect to political power? BATHOS.

We ask instead, What can the observation/consideration (*Betrachtung*) of shadows of "*les peuples*"—shadows cast on *zoē/bios* by the methods of knowledge and intervention possessed by political powers—tell us about the afterlives of memories (*Nachleben*) of a form of political life that has been termed "public happiness"? (See fig. 11.)

How do we grasp and meditate on the distance between the actual configurations of *zoē/bios*, the foyers of those configurations, which include the foyer of inquiry into those configurations, and the political shadow of civic life? PATHOS.

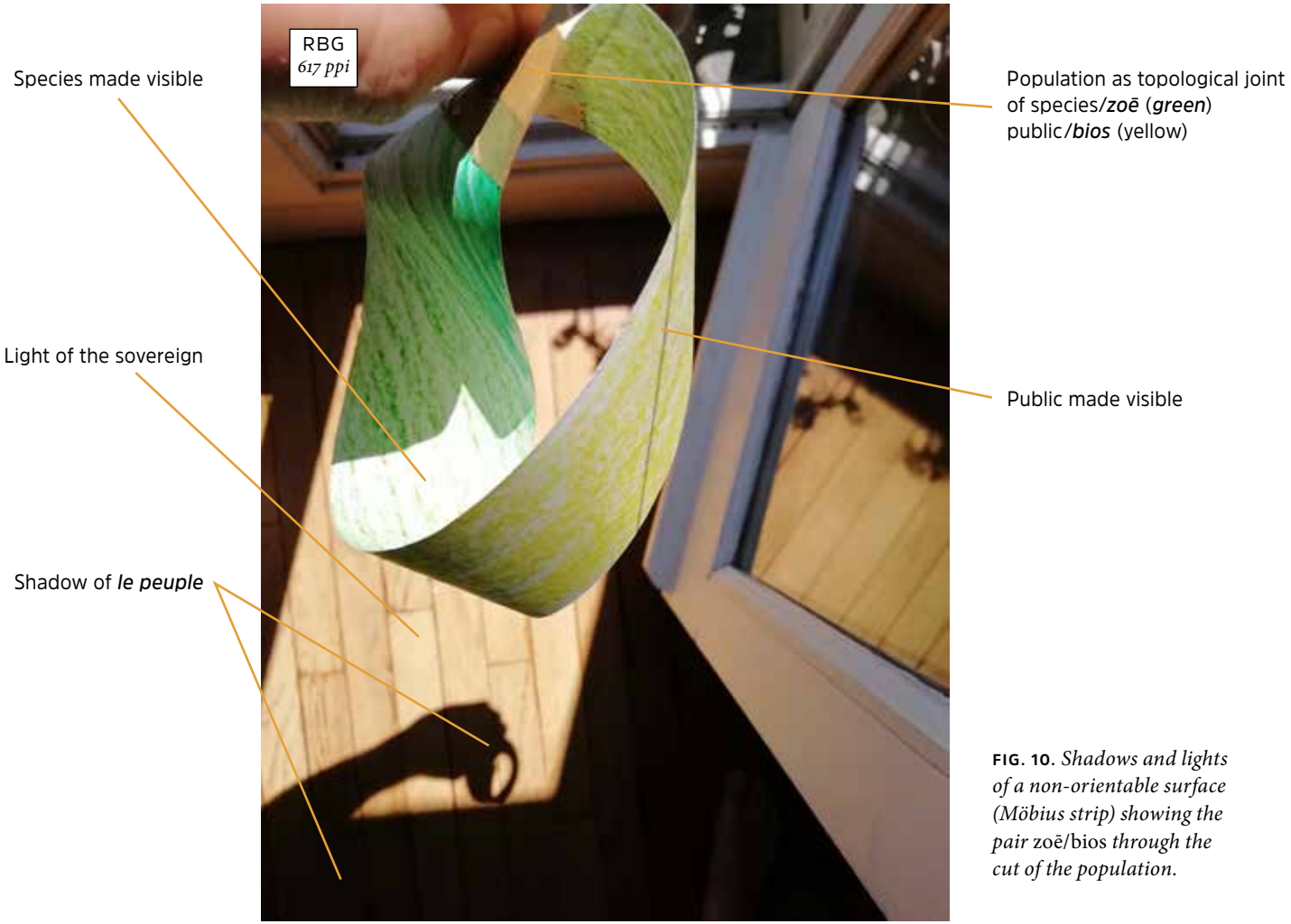


FIG. 10. *Shadows and lights of a non-orientable surface (Möbius strip) showing the pair* zoē/bios *through the cut of the population.*

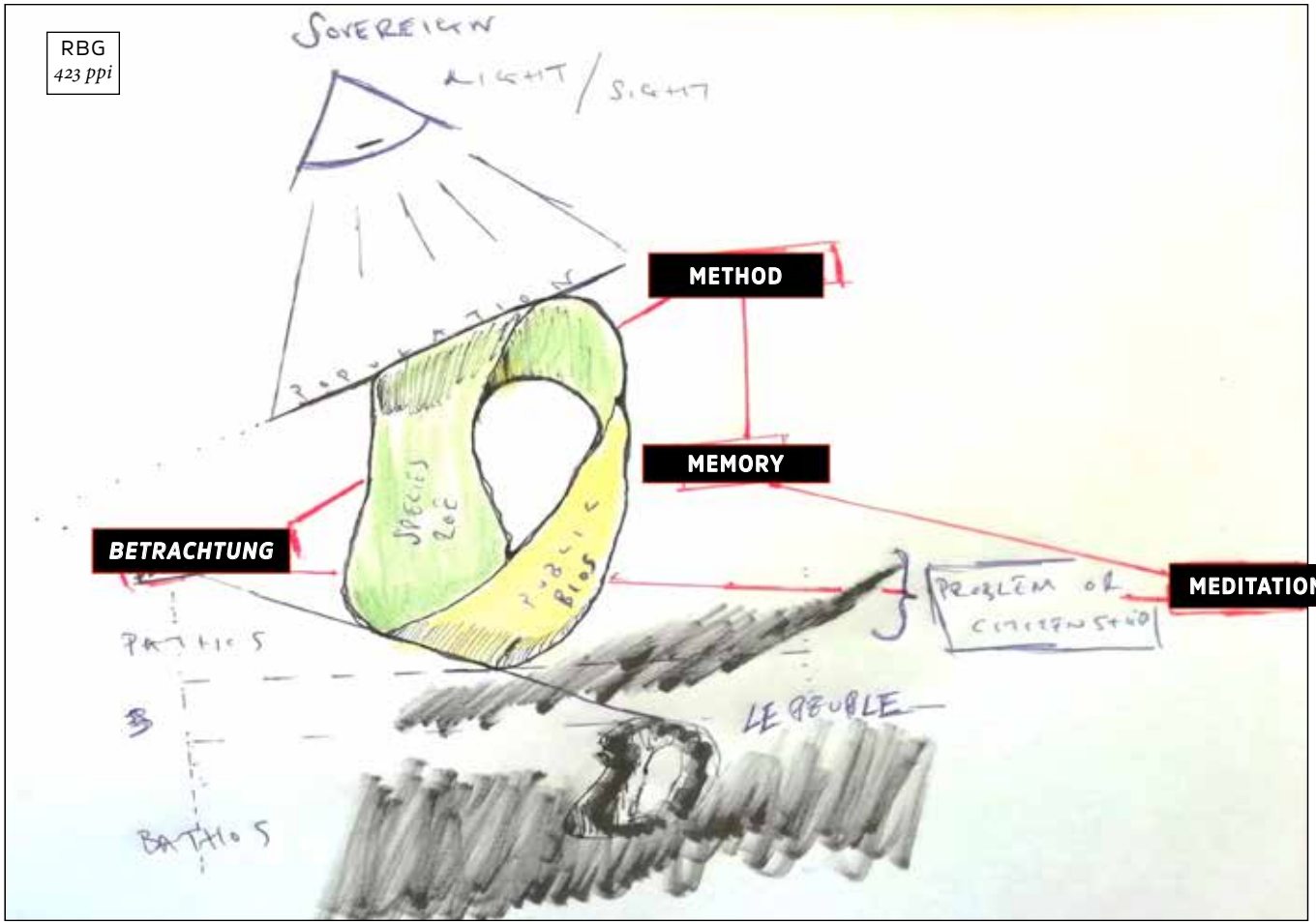


FIG. 11. *The Minor Anthropologist (conceptual persona) intervenes in the shadows and lights of the non-orientable surface of* zoë/bios/*population.*

15

Thrive

On the possible vindication of contemporary citizenship

> “. . . investigate whether to take the virtue of a good man and that of an excellent citizen to be the same or not the same.”
>
> Aristotle, *Politics,* III.4

We have devoted our efforts to creating the conditions and practices required for flourishing as ethical beings. To a significant degree, it is fair to say that we have succeeded in embodying practices and venues that afford a set of defining capacities that strive toward virtue.

Aristotle underscores a haunting and troubling issue: what is the relation between the virtuous subject and the "excellent citizen," given a wide range of political relations? Deploying his method of proliferating distinctions, the answer is that there is no necessary or harmonious or isomorphic telos in this domain. The only regime in which they would naturally converge is that of a wise ruler, perhaps a philosopher king. Such conditions are rarely encountered.

Modern proximity

Hannah Arendt, in her essay "On Humanity in Dark Times: Thoughts about Lessing," raises issues that echo the investigation proposed by Aristotle. She situates the problem historically at a general level of abstraction.

> History knows many periods of dark times in which the public realm has been obscured and the world becomes so dubious that people have ceased to ask any more of politics than that it show due consideration for their vital interests and personal liberty.[1]

As we have seen, we could map "vital interests" and "personal liberty" within the *manifold*. The neighborhood of "the people" remains a shadow. Arendt's diagnosis of the withering of politics is discouragingly salient today. She continues,

> Even where the world is still halfway in order, or is kept halfway in order, the public realm has lost the power of illumination which was originally part of its very nature.[2]

Let us assume here for the sake of brevity that there once existed a time during which at least some venues and institutions could be qualified as part of a "public realm," and that within that realm illumination was an actuality. Indeed, lest this seem too utopian or nostalgic, there have been periods at the university where such a characterization has been applicable: their *Nachleben* linger.

Dark times

If utopian schemas or revolutionary programs seem far from meeting the current demands of the day, the problem of how one should react to the overwhelming suffering, injustice, and vice saturating the social world today is inescapable. Lessing's answer, and Arendt's as well, is surprising and bracing at one and the same time.

> Lessing was troubled by the egalitarian character of compassion [Rousseau's idea that *fraternity* was the fulfillment of humanity]. . . . Lessing, on the other hand, considered friendship—which is as selective as compassion is egalitarian—to be the central phenomenon in which alone true humanity can prove itself.[3]

The claim is surprising in that it is so out of character with current progressive political discourse. It would require a certain hardiness, even courage, to proclaim that one was not going to prime "fraternity" ("sorority") in one's stance (*Haltung*) toward the actual. Even more provocative, and to many incomprehensible, would be a further statement that refusing to prime "compassion" was not declaring oneself to be some type of merciless neoliberal.

The ethical deficiency for Lessing and Arendt, following in a long tradition of thought, was that "fraternity" and/or "compassion" were not active states but passions. If one is striving toward virtue, then one must develop a means of recognizing the sway of passions so as to govern them. This insight does not mean that such passions have no place in a life well lived, only that they should not take a place of unreflective primacy.

> Because they so clearly recognized the affective nature of compassion, which can overcome us like fear without our being able to fend it off, the ancients regarded the most compassionate person as no more entitled to be called the best than the most fearful. Both emotions, because they are purely passive, make action impossible. This is the reason Aristotle treated compassion and fear together.[4]

To put it simply, in dark times, what *Haltung* to seek, given the yawning separation of ethics and politics, constitutes a pressing *problem*.

It must be admitted that the appeal of passions is seductive:

> But it is true that in "dark times" the warmth which is the pariahs' substitute for light exerts

> a great fascination upon all those who are so ashamed of the world as it is that they would like to take refuge in invisibility.[5]

"Invisibility" is one stance to adopt. Such withdrawal might well lead to an assortment of what Max Weber termed "this-worldly" ascetic practices. Some of these ascetic world-denying practices might well lead to what Foucault named as one variety of "counter-culture."

The requirements of such this-worldly asceticism on the conduct of the subject are rigorous. They place high demands on anyone venturing in that direction. An alternative, easier and less demanding to choose, and one that is dominant in certain circles today, is to proclaim one type or another of "human nature."

> In such a state of worldlessness and irreality it is easy to conclude that the element common to all men is not the world, but "human nature" of such and such a type.[6]

Such a move leads away from the historical specificities of the actual situation one might be enmeshed in toward an atemporal ontology of "such and such" a type as Arendt ironizes.

Then what?

> All this is only another way of saying that the humanitarianism of brotherhood scarcely befits those who do not belong among the insulted and the injured and can share in it only through their compassion.[7]

That is to say, those—given their social and existential condition—who proceed bathed by the warmth of the *bathos of distance*.

To return to Arendt's initial claim, delivered as was her wont, in a declarative form performing self-evidence:

> Lessing was troubled by the egalitarian character of compassion [Rousseau's idea that *fraternity* was the fulfillment of humanity]. . . . Lessing, on the other hand, considered friendship—which is as selective as compassion is egalitarian—to be the central phenomenon in which alone true humanity can prove itself.[8]

That "friendship" is selective is definitional; that it is not egalitarian means that when it is generalized out of any historical and interpersonal set of relationships it becomes something different: singularity is replaced by terms like "fraternity," "sorority," and "solidarity."

Problem

We find that the distinctive characteristic of Arendt's claim lies in her phrase "can prove itself." What that seemingly innocuous phrase implies constitutes a problem. What is a problem? Deleuze and Guattari provide one singular approach:

> A *problem*, in science or in philosophy, does not consist in answering a question but in adapting, in co-adapting, with a higher "taste" as problematic faculty, corresponding elements in the process of being determined.[9]

The challenge of problems is not to solve them by offering solutions. Rather,

> Even in philosophy, concepts are only created as a function of problems which are thought to be badly understood or badly posed (pedagogy of the concept).[10]

For us, the problem at this stage of the inquiry is, how do we relate to the complex typological forms we have forged?

No answer

At present, in July 2020, our inquiry makes it clear that we find ourselves within the manifold. We are members of a population. The main thing we have any control over is our comportment. We can wear face masks, practice social distancing, avoid gatherings, and wait. We endure the wait because a vaccine or effective antiviral therapeutics are on the horizon. Until then, if "then" ever arrives, we reside within the manifold.

Up to a point, and for an uncertain amount of time, this location is tolerable. Our inquiry, our science, tells us, however, that one of the many things it cannot provide is "public happiness." The desire for "flight" is patent, yet we believe we have shown that, at least for the time being, there is nowhere to escape to. That meta-observation is itself, to a limited degree, a form of deterritorialization.

Could one say that, in a minor anthropological mode, our ethical work long underway obliges us to recognize that the hard-won virtue of the subject is not worth sacrificing for a flight into "the people" (as currently self-constituting) or for a sovereign of whatever wisdom? At present, no figure of the virtuous citizen or of public happiness can be discerned. Given that, and given the configuration of the actual, then for the virtual subject of this *foyer d'expérience*, what appears available is one who is obliged to "mark time."

> After Nietzsche's devastating criticism of those 'last men' who 'invented happiness,' I may leave aside altogether the naive optimism in which science — that is, the technique of mastering life which rests upon science — has been celebrated as the way to happiness. Who believes in this? — aside from a few big children in university chairs or editorial offices. . . . 'What shall we do and how shall we live?' That science does not give an answer to this is indisputable. The only question that remains is the sense in which science gives 'no' answer, and whether or not science might yet be of some use to the one who puts the question correctly.

Max Weber, "Science as a Vocation"[11]

16

Ponder *Rosy blush's* Nachleben

"You have no right
to despise the present."

Michel Foucault, "What Is Enlightenment?"[1]
(on Charles Baudelaire, "The Painter of Modern Life")

Nachleben

DEFINITION

German: "afterlife or survival." Aby Warburg gave the term a specific meaning by using it conceptually to capture the sense of present but not thematized stylized motifs, such as certain gestures that he found enduring from ancient Greek friezes through to Botticelli's paintings.

USAGE

In inquiry, *Nachleben* refers to those objects, affects, and motions in modernity that are excluded or escape from modernist forms but nonetheless exist in the present. Identifying the existence of *Nachleben* in a situation contributes to the articulation of a contemporary mode. This practice foregrounds the challenge of bringing elements of the old and the new into a distinctive form, thereby enhancing understanding and freeing one from constraints wrongly taken to be determinative.[2]

In "An Answer to the Question: *What Is Enlightenment?*," Kant notes that one could well be deprived of the possibility of exercising one's civic or political rights and actions because of dominant power relations. He was fully aware that Prussia's disciplined armies monitored, controlled, and limited the sphere of association and collective action. For Kant, however, such a condition did not foreclose the options available to the subject. For Kant, as long as the subject obeyed the mandates of Frederick II, he retained the capacity to think—for himself. The exercise of this capacity was the task and obligation of Enlightenment, regardless of external limitations.

It was still possible, Kant argued, and Foucault seemed to echo, to be dominated and foreclosed in zones of action while retaining the capacity to leave the condition of *minority*. For Kant, the baseline determination that qualified the subject as remaining in a minority state was not a question of external force or power but rather the unexamined acceptance of external authority as concerned questions of thought. Consequently, for Kant, refusing Frederick's condition of obedience did not imply revolt but rather "daring to know," taking up an ethos of Enlightenment, while obeying the orders of Frederick's well-disciplined army and his civic mandates.

It is humbling to recognize that we have found ourselves in a bargain of this sort, although the defining situation today is not a question of sovereign power, however enlightened, but rather, one of a logic of *security*. Upon reflection, this work—*From Chaos to Solace*—is the product of an experience of an affective state of powerlessness as a citizen in the formal republics of which we are citizens. Yes, it represents an insistent pursuit of concept work and form-giving, albeit in a situation not of crushing oppression but of powerlessness to engage in effective political counter-conduct in an ambience of generalized indifference to thought and form-giving. The question of what other forms of counter-conduct exist, and the conditions of their conception, remains one to which we are committed.

Increasingly, we have become acutely aware that the fundamental constraints operative in a regime of security stem from the authority and rule of the expert (scientist or bureaucrat) and the institutions in which they are embedded. One can recognize the legitimacy of such a regime under the specific conditions of a state of exception (or emergency) without accepting the particular claims or practices put forth by the experts and bureaucrats. One might be perfectly willing to wear a mask, practice social distancing, and the like without legitimating the processes and practices that gave rise to these specific measures.

Minority to minor

We departed from Kant (and perhaps Foucault) by remaining uneasy and restive about the proposed forms of this *Ausgang* from minority, that is, the *Haltung* of the *Aufklärer* (or the parrhesiast). We have surveilled the skirmishes of the modern and the counter-modern and have moved on.

Our patient recalcitrance eventually drew us to shapes glimpsed on a murky horizon, where we came to imagine there loomed an alternate *Ausgang* from minority—the *minor*. We progressively realized that we were in need not only of alternate concepts and forms—dare to know—but also, fundamentally, of an alternative *foyer d'expérience*. With some reluctance to engage with the highly singular conceptual repertoire of Deleuze and Guattari, it drew us, at least for a time, into their singular web. We were studiously recalcitrant, however, about finding yet another authority to follow.

What we take with us from Deleuze and Guattari are an attitude and practice of the minor, an attitude and practice that consist in the motion and action of de- and reterritorialization.

Diagramming deterritorialization

As laid out in *Inquiry after Modernism*, we have sought to remediate and reoccupy spaces of thought—more specifically, zones for the interconnection of problems (fig. 12; see the red band at the bottom of the diagram) by way of a technical support that consists of a *foyer d'expérience* of inquiry.

Broadly, the motion from left to right in the diagram shows a series of operations of transformation, in which determinations from *foyers d'expérience* (blue/black) in one topological configuration are deterritorialized and taken up, reterritorialized, to another topological space, and perhaps, we hope, de- and reterritorialized in yet another *foyer d'expérience*.

In the topological diagram of this de-/reterritorialization, we show the motion of a subject of inquiry (green wave) moving through a series of topological spaces, beginning with *foyers d'expérience* rooted in the actual, proximate to the plane of phenomenal determinations, and moving toward a virtual anthropological problem space, which should, in principle, be actualizable—hence the loop descending back toward the plane of phenomenal determinations.

This green wave, the subject of inquiry, is the work of the *Gemüt*, not a subject taken up as individual or substance, "but the position or place of the *Gemütskräfte* (the *Gemüt*'s powers) of sensibility, imagination, understanding and reason."[3]

The diagram recapitulates two steps of the movement of this subject, this persona: first, the subject of inquiry's motion through a *foyer d'expérience* of inquiry (black box) shows how this foyer is in interconnection (*agencement*) with another foyer (blue); in this second foyer, determinations about the discordance/indeterminations in ethos at the conjuncture of the pandemic event (an event on the plane of phenomenal determinations) have been rendered.

From the *agencement* of these foyers, we could name our conceptual persona as the *minor anthropologist in flight*. The term *agencement* was conceptualized by Deleuze and Guattari as a means of disrupting a tendency in psychoanalytic and philosophical practice and reflection to stifle and impede the ensembles, connections, and arrangements that desire, action, thought, and speech can produce. In psychoanalytic and philosophic reflection, the *subject*, that is to say, the *individual subject* (or individual-as-subject), is frequently and damagingly considered as the privileged site for locating the source of the expression of desire. Interpretation is constrained to the personal. Or, on the contrary, desire is characterized only by lack, and the existence of the subject

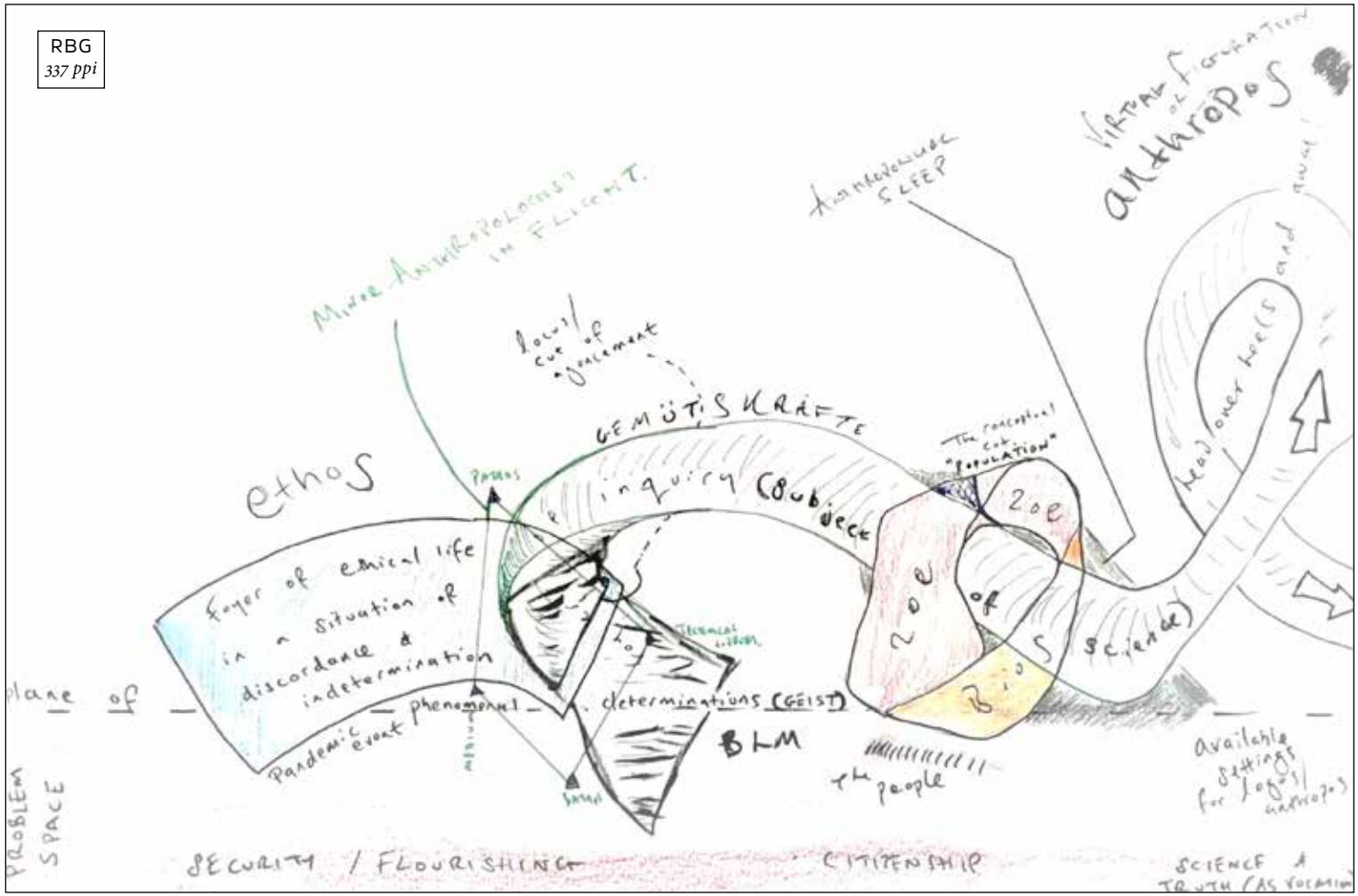


FIG. 12. *Drawing motion within a topological movement space.*

is barred from the "real." Our conceptual persona is a product of the collective *agencement* of enunciation in the deterritorializations of inquiry and the desiring-production of creative inquiry.

Refusal to externalize malice

Our own practice of de-/reterritorialization can be contrasted with two major, hence available, and not per se antithetical alternatives regarding territorializations at the conjuncture of the pandemic event. On the one hand, we have the hyper-cathexis of the reterritorialization of the "home" as the physical site, or command and control center, for Internet-mediated layers of work-learning-leisure, varied as they are across socioeconomic strata. On the other hand, we have the refusal to deterritorialize from the sites and settings of *la vie courante*, at work, in institutions of learning, in leisure. To give just one flagrant example, the insistence of some (chiefly young adults) on spending their leisure time together in nightclubs, Airbnb rentals, pubs, or cafés.

These alternatives are excessive to the degree that they point to attitudes that either are too easily reconciled to the situation or are fundamentally malicious, in François Flahault's sense of the term: an externalization of evil. Malice, we might say without deforming his argument, is a consequence of a basic split in which a subject of knowledge cannot integrate or even really understand, in a strict sense, that which is said about the subject qua subject of existence. Flahault puts it elegantly:

> What a narrative says about the *subject of existence* is something that the *subject of knowledge* is not in a position to hear.[4]

Flahault's problem operates on an anthropological register: not only is the subject of knowledge in no position to govern the subject of existence but also the subject of knowledge fundamentally misunderstands the subject of existence to the degree that the subject of knowledge cannot hear what is said about its counterpart.

As an anthropological claim, however insightful, nevertheless this is too excessive. To say that the subject of knowledge can never hear what is said about the subject of existence, that it is never in a position to hear what is said, is too declarative. Kant's user of public reason, the *Aufklärer*, can reason about what is said about the user of private reason, even if these figures do not simultaneously occupy positions such that "communication" would be possible. We leave communicative rationality to others.

We acknowledge the fading of the *Aufklärung*'s rosy blush. We can still hear clearly the echoes of Weber's mockery of those big children and their naive optimism in *technē* as the route to *eudaemonia*, even as we simultaneously refuse to forget (hence we can still hear, as subjects of existence) those figures of enlightenment who accompany us amid the seeming impasses of modernity.

> We must try to proceed with the analysis of ourselves as beings who are historically determined, to a certain extent, by the Enlightenment.[5]

To take up Foucault's refusal of the "blackmail" about the Enlightenment (is it good or is it bad?) is precisely part of the refusal of an externalization of malice. Foucault's concern, one that is arguably urgent today, is for inquirers to ask,

> what is not or is no longer indispensable for the constitution of ourselves as autonomous subjects.[6]

A first step is not to despise the present, as despicable as it may be, so as to gain the appropriate distance toward the actual, and then perhaps to imagine something else, including the acute awareness of not accepting the lure of imagining something else at this conjuncture.

Paul Klee (1879–1940)
Winterreise *(Winter Journey), 1921*
Watercolor and transferred printing ink on paper, bordered with ink, mounted on cardboard
17⅞ × 12⅝ in. (45.4 × 32.1 cm)
The Berggruen Klee Collection, 1984

NOTES

1. *Parastēma* for Inquiry

1. Gilles Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, translated by Hugh Tomlinson (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006; originally published 1962), p. 1.

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TO *Christine Taylor*

master of mimesis, phenomenal creator of form

(mimesis: *that which lifts the transient into abidingness*)

W. F. Trench, "Mimesis in Aristotle's Poetics,"
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PRODUCED BY WILSTED & TAYLOR PUBLISHING SERVICES

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